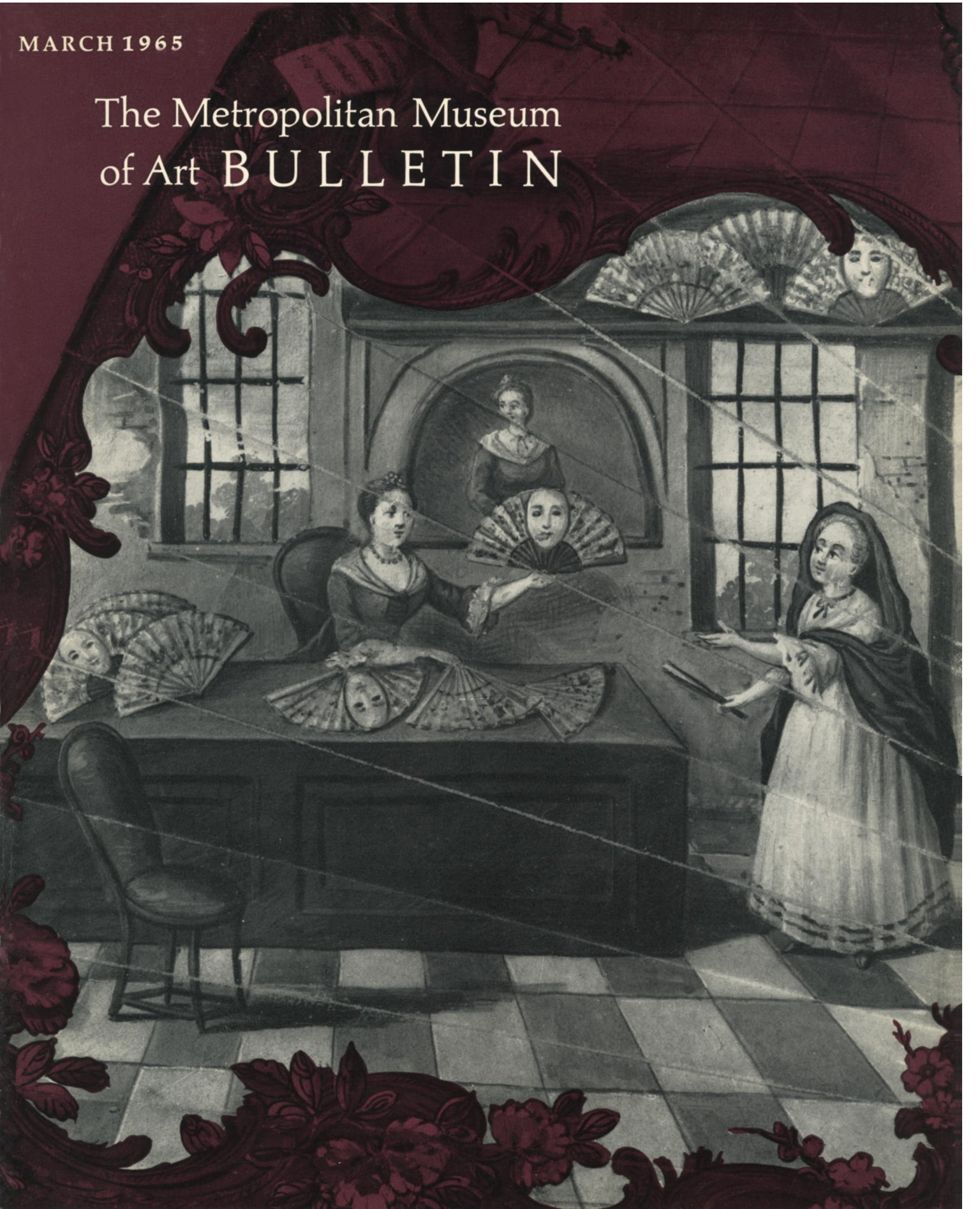
MARCH 1965

The Metropolitan Museum of Art BULLETIN



Fabergé's Objects of Fantasy

JESSIE McNAB DENNIS *Assistant Curator of Western European Arts*

The 1914 Baedeker guide to Russia – which was to be the last – thoughtfully provided the visitor to St. Petersburg with a brief account of the amenities of the city before taking him on the usual thorough walking tour covering its commercial, historical, and cultural aspects. In addition to the lists of hotels, restaurants, tramways, steamers, clubs, churches, theaters, gardens, baths, and banks is a select list of shops for such commodities as books, boots, cigars, confectionery, furs, galoshes, maps, newspapers, porcelain, and tea. Ten goldsmiths and jewelers were listed, all with addresses on either the fashionable Nevski Prospekt or the equally smart Morskaya Street. With one exception these are now unknown to all but enthusiasts of the late imperial period in Russia. The impartiality of the guide gives no hint that the firm of Fabergé, at 24 Morskaya Street, held a unique place in the affection and patronage not only of the city, the court, and the nation, but also, one might justly say, of Europe and the world. Now, fifty years later, the name is almost a household word.

Such fame is out of all proportion both to the amount that has been written about the firm and its proprietor, Peter Carl Fabergé – there are in fact only two books – and to the number of occasions when collections of his work have been seen by the public. In this country only the Lillian Thomas Pratt Collection in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, and a handful of pieces at the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore are on permanent display. Of all American cities, however, New York was the first to see the work of Fabergé on public exhibition when, in 1929, Armand Hammer put on view the

FRONTISPIECE: *Desk accessories. Clockwise from top: Paperweight; nephrite, alabaster, red gold, and diamonds. Stamp box; probably 1903-1914; workmaster, Henrik Wigström; red and green gold, silver, and blue enamel. Gluepot; probably 1903-1910; workmaster, Henrik Wigström; gold, red enamel, and chalcedony. Paper knife; about 1896-1903; workmaster, Michael Perchin; silver gilt, red enamel, and diamond. Pencil; probably 1887-1906; gold, silver, blue-gray enamel, diamonds, amethyst, and sapphire. Magnifying glass; probably 1890-1906; workmaster, Henrik Wigström; red and yellow gold, and nephrite. Whistle; probably 1890-1906; gold and pink enamel. Hand seal; probably late XIX-early XX century; gold, lapis lazuli, white and ivory enamel, and diamonds. Sealing-wax holder; about 1886-1896; workmaster, Michael Perchin; red and green gold, white enamel, and carnelian. Height of paperweight 4¼ inches. L.62.8.164, 54, 50, 70, 145, 119, 72, 63, 53*

Contents

ON THE COVER: *Detail of an eighteenth century Spanish fan.* *See page 253*

All the objects illustrated in this article were made under the direction of Peter Carl Fabergé (1846-1920), and have been lent to the Museum by Mr. and Mrs. Lansdell K. Christie

treasures brought back by him from Russia on the completion of his medical relief mission. Now with the loan to the Metropolitan in 1962 by Mr. and Mrs. Lansdell K. Christie of their entire Fabergé collection, numbering some 175 pieces, New York has again become the leading center in this country in which to see the work of this house.

When the Baedeker guide was published, Peter Carl Fabergé was still presiding over the firm at 24 Morskaya Street, and it was then at the peak of its success. Thirty years earlier he had successfully taken it on a new path by including what he called "objects of fantasy" among his exhibits at the Pan-Russian Exhibition of 1882. The entries gained him a gold medal, and the year following he became a court jeweler with the grant, by Alexander III, of the royal warrant. The royal warrant of the Court of Sweden and Norway followed in 1897, and by the opening years of the present century Fabergé had business connections with India and China and had visited the Court of Siam to receive commissions. In every major exhibition after 1885 in which it took part, the house exhibited non-competitively, since it was represented on the jury, and in 1900 Carl Fabergé was acclaimed "Master" at the Paris Universal Exposition and awarded the Legion of Honor. It is small wonder that in 1907 Baron A. de Foelkersam, in his inventory of the Czar's collection of goldsmith's work, stated that "this firm is one of the best and most famous in the world." Foelkersam was quite right to call the house a "firm." The extension of Fabergé's reputation was accompanied by a corresponding extension of his business: branches were opened at Moscow (1887), Odessa (1890), and Kiev (1905); the London agency established in 1903 became a full-fledged branch in 1906. Furthermore, in 1870 when Carl Fabergé, at the age of twenty-four, assumed the management of the successful jewelry business built up by his father from a basement shop in Morskaya Street, master jewelers and goldsmiths, with their assistants and apprentices, worked to the order of the owner, rather than independently as had been the custom for centuries past. This "firm"-like character became greater under Carl Fabergé, who added silverware and lapidary work to his stock, as well as greatly enlarging the fields of his jewelers and goldsmiths. The control and direction of the company remained in his hands, although many decisions were shared with his younger brother Agathon, a brilliant designer, and in the course of time with his sons Eugène, Agathon, Alexander, and Nicholas, all of whom joined the firm when they were old enough. The

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART *Bulletin*

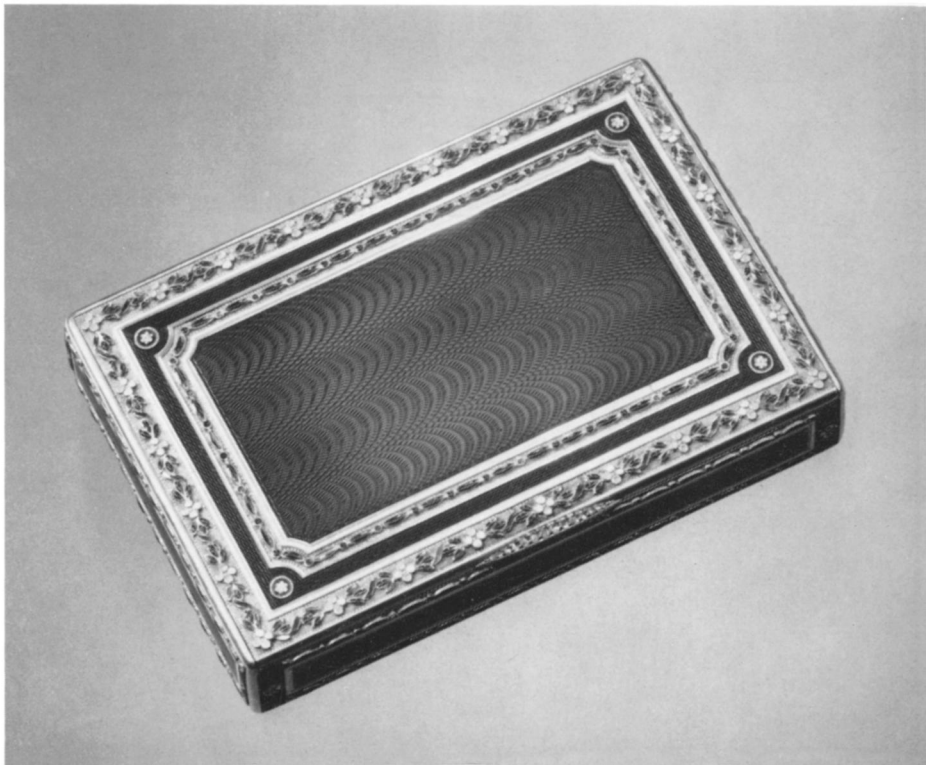
VOLUME XXIII, NUMBER 7 MARCH 1965

St. Petersburg operations were so extensive that in 1900 he had to move out of the old shop to take over larger premises on the same street – those at number 24. With the exception of Rappoport's workshop for silverware, most of the craftsmen were accommodated in the new building, together with a studio for the designers, in the stories above the ground floor. These included workshops for goldsmithery, headed by Erik Kollin, August Hollming, and Michael Perchin (later, after Perchin died, by Henrik Wigström); for jewelry, headed by August Holmström and Alfred Tielemann; for enameling, headed by Petrov and Boitzov; and for lapidary work, headed by Karl Woerffel. Since all these masters had staffs of assistants and apprentices, the total number working for Fabergé has been estimated at close to five hundred.

Silverware, especially large dinner services, became an important part of Fabergé's business, and jewelry naturally remained important. This we know more from records of Fabergé's commissions than from examples which have survived intact. It is, however, upon the objects of fantasy that Fabergé's fame securely rests. These, which have survived in large numbers, not only give ample proof of the technical excellence for which the firm was so famous but also exemplify the particular "Fabergé" quality that was held in such obvious affection in his own time and still exerts its fascination today. It is surely no mere chance that the first piece by Fabergé ever acquired by Mr. Christie, a deep blue enameled cigarette case (Figure 1), should possess this "Fabergé" quality to a high degree, for it was also this piece that converted him into a collector of the master's work. It is one of many cigarette cases that Fabergé made, for both men and women, for in Russia women were accustomed to smoking by the turn of the century. In addition to the tooling of the gold body itself and the rich, translucent luster of the enameling, its carved frame is decorated with raised green and opalescent enamel "jewels," and the thumbpiece of the lid with tiny rose diamonds. The "Fabergé" quality may be called one of multiple paradox – that a practical object liable to mechanical damage in daily handling should have so large an area of fragile enamel; that precious stones should fill the secondary role of outlining the inconspicuous thumbpiece; and that so unusual a combination of precious materials and supreme craftsmanship should suggest neither whimsy nor extravagance but on the contrary dignity and reserve.

These paradoxes turn into "objects of fantasy" – to use his own term – the many items of practical utility that Fabergé made, and that were a major part of his stock in trade. He could take the simplest toilet or desk accessory – a letter opener, say, or a stamp box (Frontispiece) – and make of it an object of infinite preciousness and elegance. There were also non-utilitarian pieces among Fabergé's stock items (as distinct from commissioned pieces), such as artificial flowers and a variety of miniatures, which possess the qualities of paradox and fantasy to an even more arresting degree.

Take, for example, the flowers. Baedeker informed his readers: "The climate of St. Petersburg is very unsettled. . . . Winter lasts for six months and snow often falls as late as May. . . . The average temperature of July—the warmest month—is only 64°." There were, however, ways of reminding oneself of

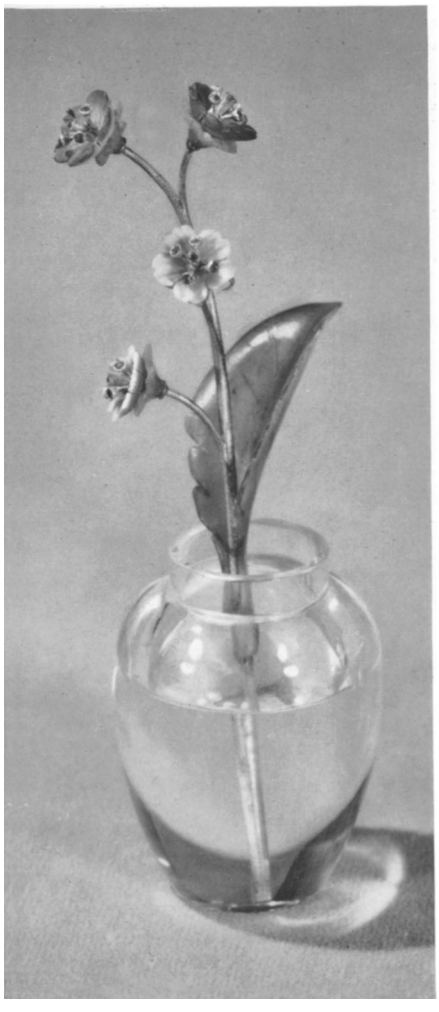


1. Cigarette case. Probably 1900-1910. Workmaster, Henrik Wigström. Gold, diamonds, and blue, red, green, and white enamel. Length 3¾ inches. L.62.8.21

2. *Dandelion "seed clock." Probably 1903-1914. Workmaster, probably Henrik Wigström. Nephrite, rock crystal, gold, asbestos fiber, and diamonds. Height 5¾ inches. L.62.8.84. Photograph: Taylor & Dull*

summer. Whereas the empress filled her room with flowers sent up weekly from the Crimea, the great ballerina Mathilde Kschessinska tells us that at her last dinner party in St. Petersburg, her "swan song before the Revolution," she brought out a "superb collection of artificial flowers made of precious stones and a small gold fir tree, with branches shimmering with little diamonds." These almost certainly came from Fabergé, and perhaps of all his objects of fantasy the flowers are most unforgettable. And how wise Fabergé was in taking as his models wild rather than cultivated flowers, which look as if they had just been picked on a walk through the woods or meadows. One fine example is a seeded dandelion resting in a pot of rock crystal cut so as to produce the trompe-l'oeil effect of a water level half an inch below the top (Figure 2). Two carved nephrite leaves spring from the gold stem, and the seed ball itself, though looking as light and fluffy as that of the actual plant, is made of spun asbestos, with diamonds on springy gold wires twinkling here and there in its midst. Another quite characteristic example is a spray of wild flowers (Figure 3) with petals of tinted chalcedony arranged around ruby centers. The nephrite leaves and the gold stem rest in an urn of rock crystal, again carved to give the illusion of water just below the rim.

The menagerie of Fabergé animals in miniature is as endearing as the flowers are arresting. Like the flowers, the animals were primarily the work of lapidaries, undoubtedly numerous, but of whom only Kremleff and Darbysheff are known by name. The animals delight by their unique personalities, sometimes conveyed by a kind of expression, almost humanly and comically at variance with their physique—for instance the observant and critical sow in aventurine quartz (Figure 4). Another part of their charm lies in the choice of materials, at times ingeniously appropriate, at times just as ingeniously audacious. A tortoise, for instance, with limbs and head of gray jasper (Figure 6), has a carapace of fossilized coral that forms hexagonal patterns very similar to those on the animal itself. A bison (Figure 7), a virtuoso example of carving, is fashioned from a single piece of obsidian, carved with a matte surface to look shaggy, and only the muzzle polished to give an impression of a healthily wet nose. In the case of the puzzled puppy in opal and the dozing hound in purpurine (Figure 5), the choice of materials is startling in its daring.



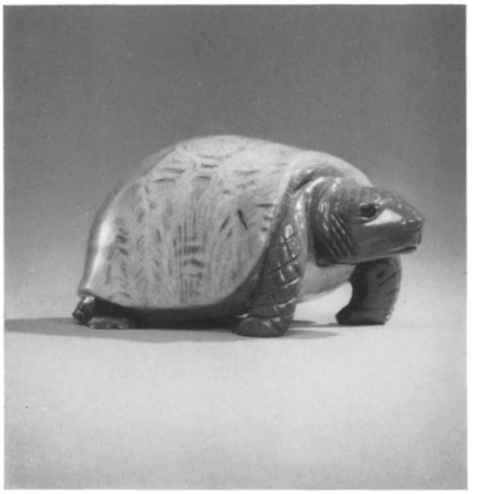
3. *Spring wild flowers. Probably 1900-1914. Chalcedony, nephrite, rock crystal, gold, and rubies. Height 4¾ inches. L.62.8.85. Photograph: Taylor & Dull*

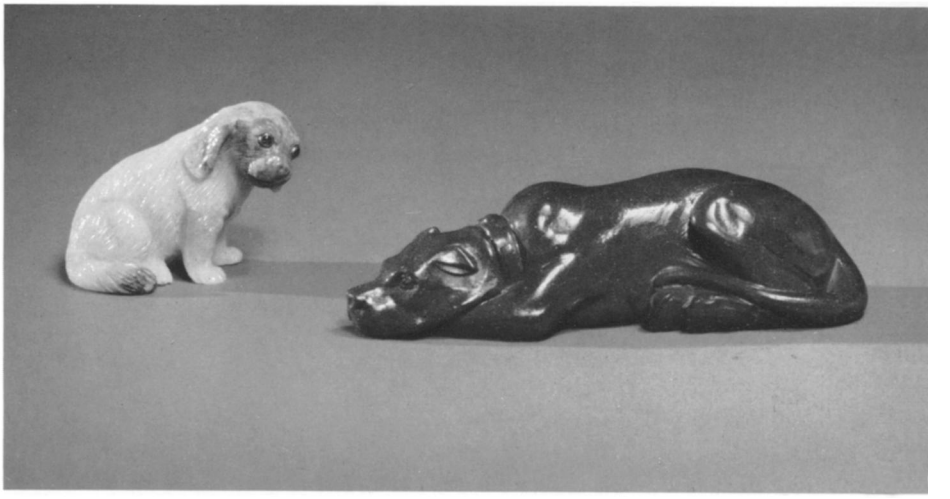
Julia Grant, President Grant's granddaughter, who lived in St. Petersburg after her marriage to Prince Catacuzène, noted such "tiny animals in precious stones by Fabergé" during her first visit to the Dowager Empress in the Anitchkoff Palace. The Catacuzène family were in fact early sponsors of Fabergé, and it was only natural that the Princess Catacuzène should fall in with her new family's interest. When Henry Walters visited her in St. Petersburg in 1900 she introduced him to Fabergé, and four animals now in the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore were bought from Fabergé as a result.

All these pieces were surely stock items, but Fabergé also executed special commissions of animal portraits. The best-known collection of these is at Sandringham, Edward VII's country house and farm in Norfolk, still used by the royal family. From models of Persimmon, the king's Derby-winner, and Caesar, his favorite rough-haired terrier, the scheme was enlarged to include not only the queen's dogs, but, according to Henry Bainbridge, Fabergé's London agent, "the whole farm yard, heifers, bullocks, cocks and hens, turkeys, Shire horses, even pigs." Bainbridge wondered how the artists could be spared so long from St. Petersburg, but Fabergé solved the problem by sending a group of them to

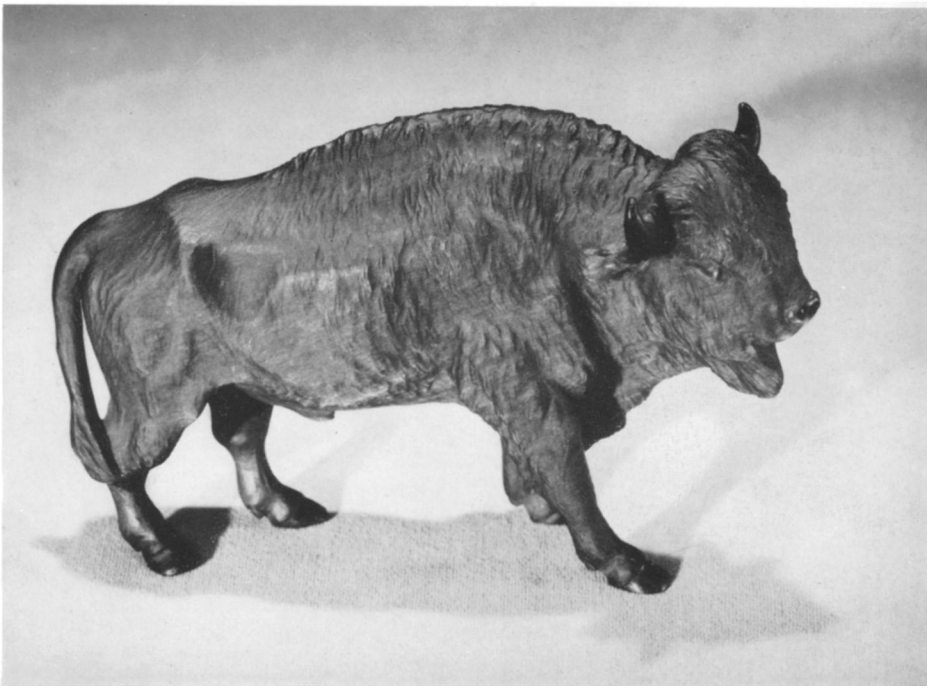
4. *Sow. Aventurine quartz and rubies. Length 5 inches. L.62.8.107. Photograph: Taylor & Dull*

5 *(below, right). Spaniel puppy; probably 1903-1914; opal, gold, and rubies; height 1 1/16 inches. Dozing hound; probably 1903-1915; purpurine and olivine; length 3 1/8 inches. L.62.8.108, 143*





6. *Tortoise. Fossilized coral, gray Kalgan jasper, and rubies. Length 2 1/4 inches. L.62.8.102*



7. *Bison. Obsidian. Length 5 1/8 inches. L.62.8.98. Photograph: Taylor & Dull*

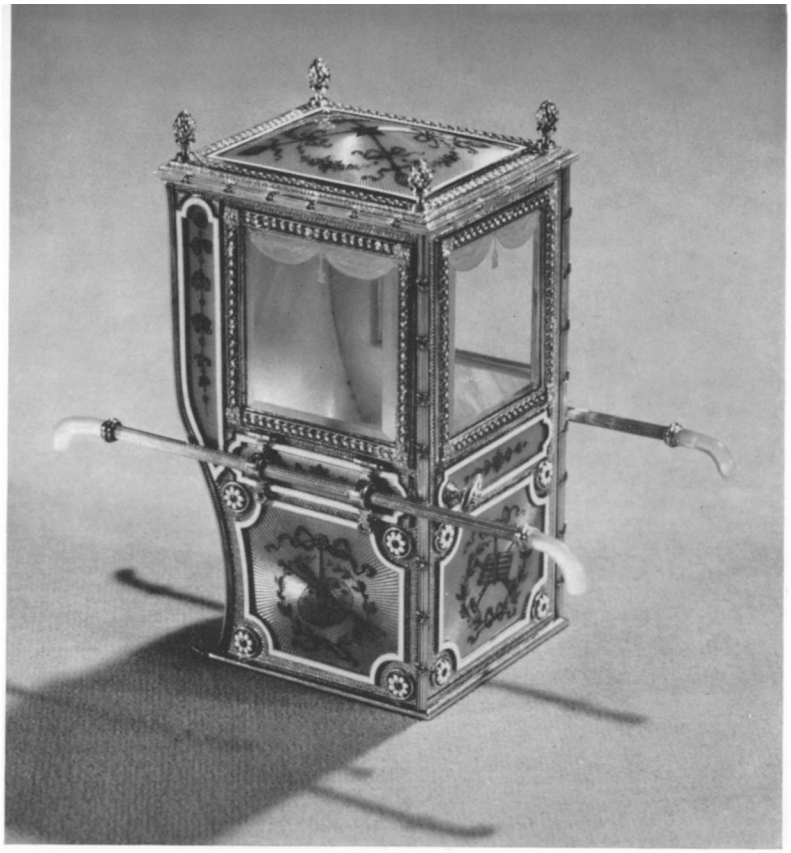
8. Kovsh; late XIX-early XX century; nephrite, gold, red enamel, pearl, and diamonds; length 2½ inches. Watering can; probably 1887-1906; nephrite, gold, red enamel, and diamonds; length 4 1/16 inches. L.62.8.160, 11

model the animals in wax from life, the lapidary work then being done from the waxes in St. Petersburg.

More famous in their time than the animals were the Fabergé representations in miniature of the insignia of the crown, executed in gold and diamonds in the shop of the jeweler August Holmström, and exhibited in the Hermitage by the order of the Czar. Still other works in miniature were in the form of objects of domestic use. As with the animal figures, the sometimes perfectly appropriate and sometimes unorthodox choice of materials is in each case a striking addition to the general effectiveness of the design. Thus a miniature watering can and a small cup, or kovsh (Figure 8), are made as fantasies in dark green Siberian nephrite, ornamented with diamonds, gold, and red enamel. By contrast, a cabinet in the Louis XVI style (Figure 9) is made of dark chalcedony with carved red, green, and yellow gold mounts, suggesting ebony with gilt-bronze mounts, and plaques painted with trophies and flowers in sepia enamel are set into the sides to resemble marquetry. Although all Fabergé enamel work is outstanding – even masters in Paris acknowledged his superiority in this field – this painted sepia enameling is among the most attractive in his repertoire.

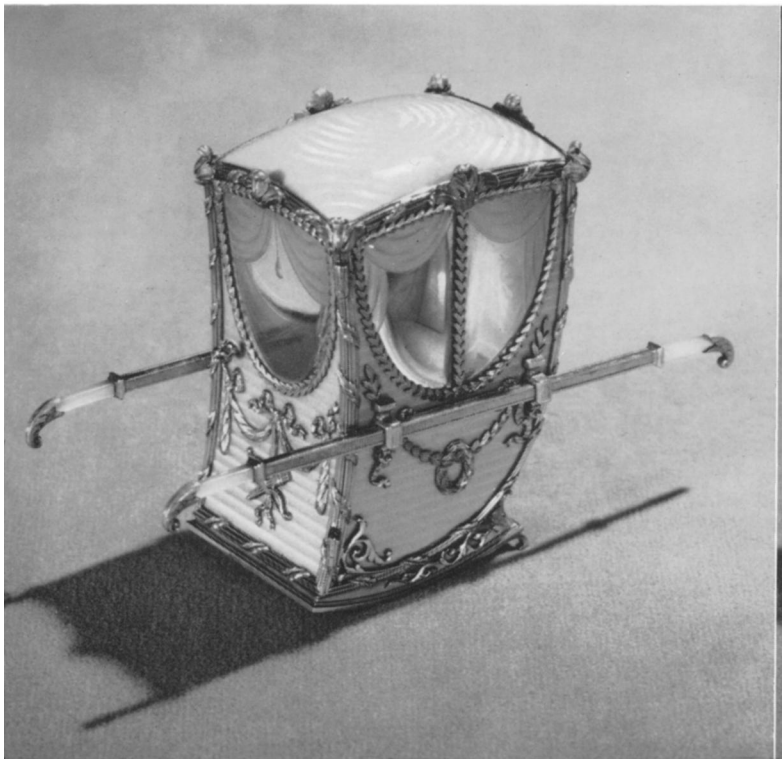
Miniature sedan chairs (Figures 10-12) were made in several styles, and the degree to which two of these differ illustrates how a certain popular item would be kept in step with the fashion of the times – for some years separate the two. Both pieces have gold

9. Cabinet in the Louis XVI style. About 1896-1903. Workmaster, Michael Perchin. Dark brown chalcedony, red, green, and yellow gold, beige and sepia enamel, and rock crystal. Height 5¼ inches. L. 62.8.7. Photograph: Taylor & Dull



10. Sedan chair. About 1900. Workmaster, Michael Perchin. Red and yellow gold, rock crystal, mother-of-pearl, and rose and sepia, green, and white enamel. Height 3⅝ inches. L.62.8.9. Photograph: Taylor & Dull

11, 12. Sedan chair. About 1903-1908. Workmaster, Henrik Wigström. Red and green gold, rock crystal, mother-of-pearl, and pink enamel. Height 3 inches. L.62.8.8. Photographs: Taylor & Dull



frames enclosing enameled panels and rock crystal windows, and one of them is engraved within to simulate curtains. The doors may be unlatched and opened – for these miniatures are complete in every detail – to reveal an interior lined with mother-of-pearl. But the earlier one, made about 1900, is in a form suggesting the early eighteenth century, and its somewhat severe lines contrast very noticeably with the gorgeousness of its fabric. The later, made in the Edwardian era, suggests by the sweetness of its color and lines the more feminine mood of the opening decade of this century.

The lapidarists were entirely responsible for Fabergé's figures. An explanation for the origin of these miniatures was given by his son Agathon, who lived until 1951. According to Agathon, the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaivitch asked Fabergé to make a caricature of Queen Victoria. This he would not agree to do, although he did supply a very small, rather stout little figure wearing a crown, carved from a single piece of jadeite. This figure, still in existence, gave Fabergé the idea of making a whole series, but building them up in differently colored semiprecious stones as had been done in Italy and Germany in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Agathon thought that in all only thirty different designs were modeled. Probably only a few examples of each model were carried out, so the figures are the rarest group of Fabergé's stock items.

A few English and Oriental examples have been recorded, but Russian national types, such as city tradesmen and country artisans, were the most numerous. Female figures such as the muzhik with a retroussé nose and lifted, hopeful expression (Figure 13), are especially uncommon. The sleeves of her padded jacket extend well over her fingertips, and her skirt reaches all the way down to her sturdy boots. Tucked under one arm is a sheaf of birch switches, and in her other hand is a bundle.

13. Peasant; purpurine, toned chalcedony, black marble, aventurine quartz, gold, and sapphires; height 3⅝ inches. Peasant woman; probably early XX century; amazonite, chalcedony, aventurine quartz, nephrite, gray jasper, purpurine oxidized silver, and sapphires; height 4⅞ inches. L.62.8.151, 154

The materials used for this figure include amazonite, chalcedony, aventurine quartz, nephrite, jasper, purpurine, and oxidized silver. The eyes are tiny sapphires. Another peasant figure, also from the country artisan series (Figure 13), carries no attribute to indicate his calling, for this peasant has been drinking and is with difficulty maintaining his balance. The principal material, used for his high-collared shirt, is purpurine. This beautiful material is a dense opaque glass of deep red color, reputedly made to a secret formula, now lost, by members of the Petuchov family employed at the Imperial Glass Factory. Fabergé appears to have had exclusive use of it.

Two of Fabergé's cityscape figures are a coachman in a characteristic long padded coat carved from a single lump of lapis lazuli, and a pie peddler carrying a tray under one arm and balancing a covered basket of pies on his head (Figure 15).

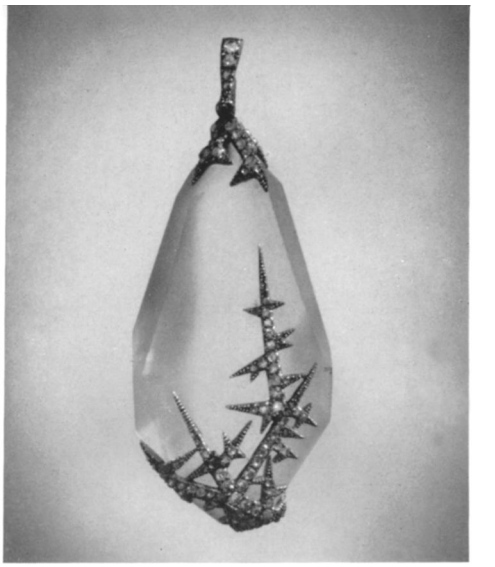
Fabergé employed the same technique for portraits, such as those of the Czarina's and the Dowager Empress's Cossack bodyguards. Another such portrait is of the gypsy singer Varya Panina (Figure 14). She sang in the Yar restaurant and seems to have been known to all who frequented Moscow before the first World War. Prince Felix Yusupov wrote of her, "Even when she was well on in years this very ugly woman, always dressed in black, cast a spell over her audience with her deep pathetic voice." This figure is almost double the size of the others and, in contrast to them, presents a subdued appearance both in pose and coloring. Unlike them, it may have been produced in the Moscow rather than the St. Petersburg branch.

Many objects from Fabergé had their origin in a client's imagination and were made to special order. A matte-surfaced rock crystal pendant with small diamonds arranged in a frost design (Figure 16) was one of several ordered by Emanuel Nobel, who on the occasion of a dinner party in Sweden gave all

14. Varya Panina. Probably early XX century. Variegated and banded jasper, red jasper, jadeite, carnelian, purpurine, black marble, gold, silver, and diamonds. Height 7 inches. L.62.8.91. Photograph: Taylor & Dull

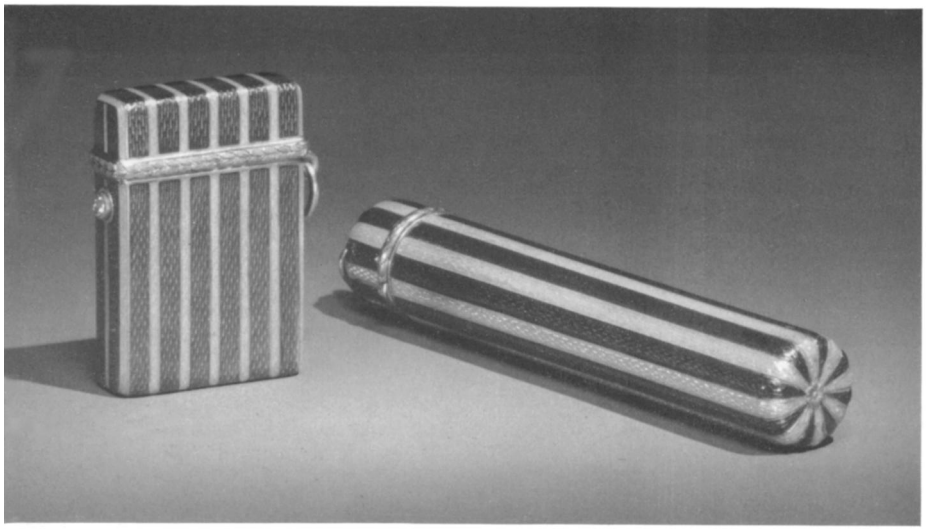
15. Coachman; probably early XX century; lapis lazuli, aventurine quartz, obsidian, black marble, gold, and varicolored enamel; height 3⅝ inches. Pie peddler; probably early XX century; assembled in Henrik Wigström's workshop; horn agate, white glass, chalcedony, carnelian, lapis lazuli, black marble, gold, silver, white and yellow enamel, and sapphires; height 4⅞ inches L.62.8.92, 155

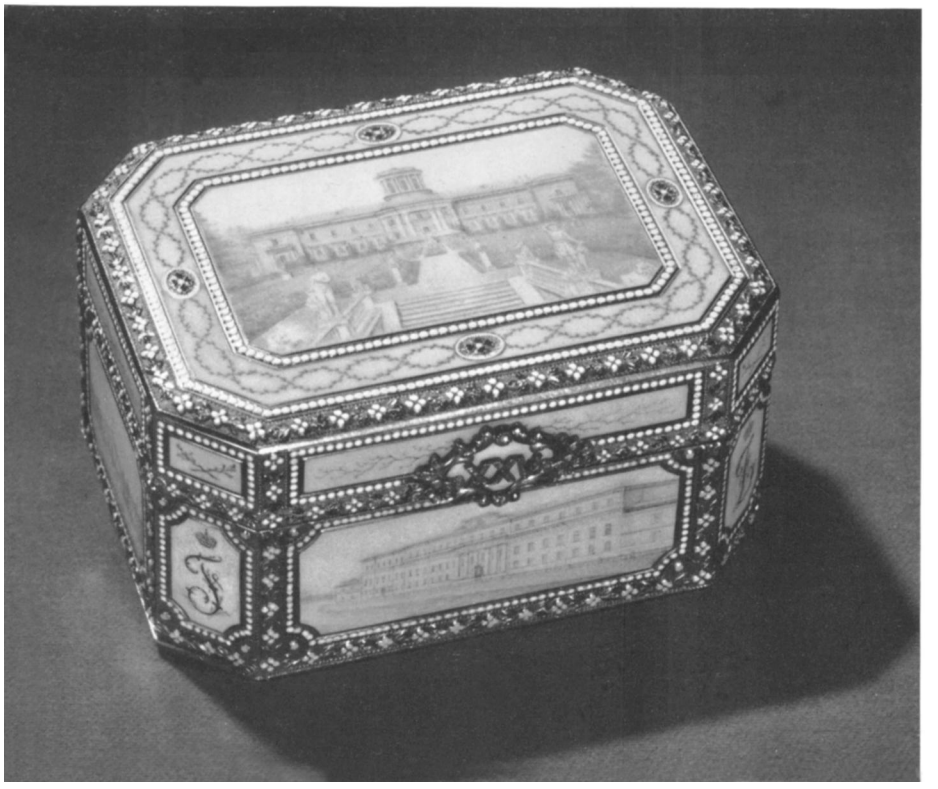
16. *Pendant. Probably early XX century. Rock crystal, silver, and diamonds. Length 2 1/16 inches. L.62.8.162*



17. *Matchbox; about 1911-1912; red and green gold, silver gilt, yellow and blue enamel, and diamond; height 1 3/4 inches. Bodkin case; about 1912-1913; gold, silver gilt, and yellow and blue enamel; length 3 7/8 inches. L.62.8.134, 55*

18. *Music box. About 1907. Gold, diamonds, and pink and sanguine, green, and white enamel. Length 3 1/2 inches. L.62.8.18*





the ladies a present recalling the Russian winter. Leopold Rothschild in London used his racing colors of royal blue and yellow as a signature on countless small, useful gifts, such as the matchbox and bodkin case in Figure 17.

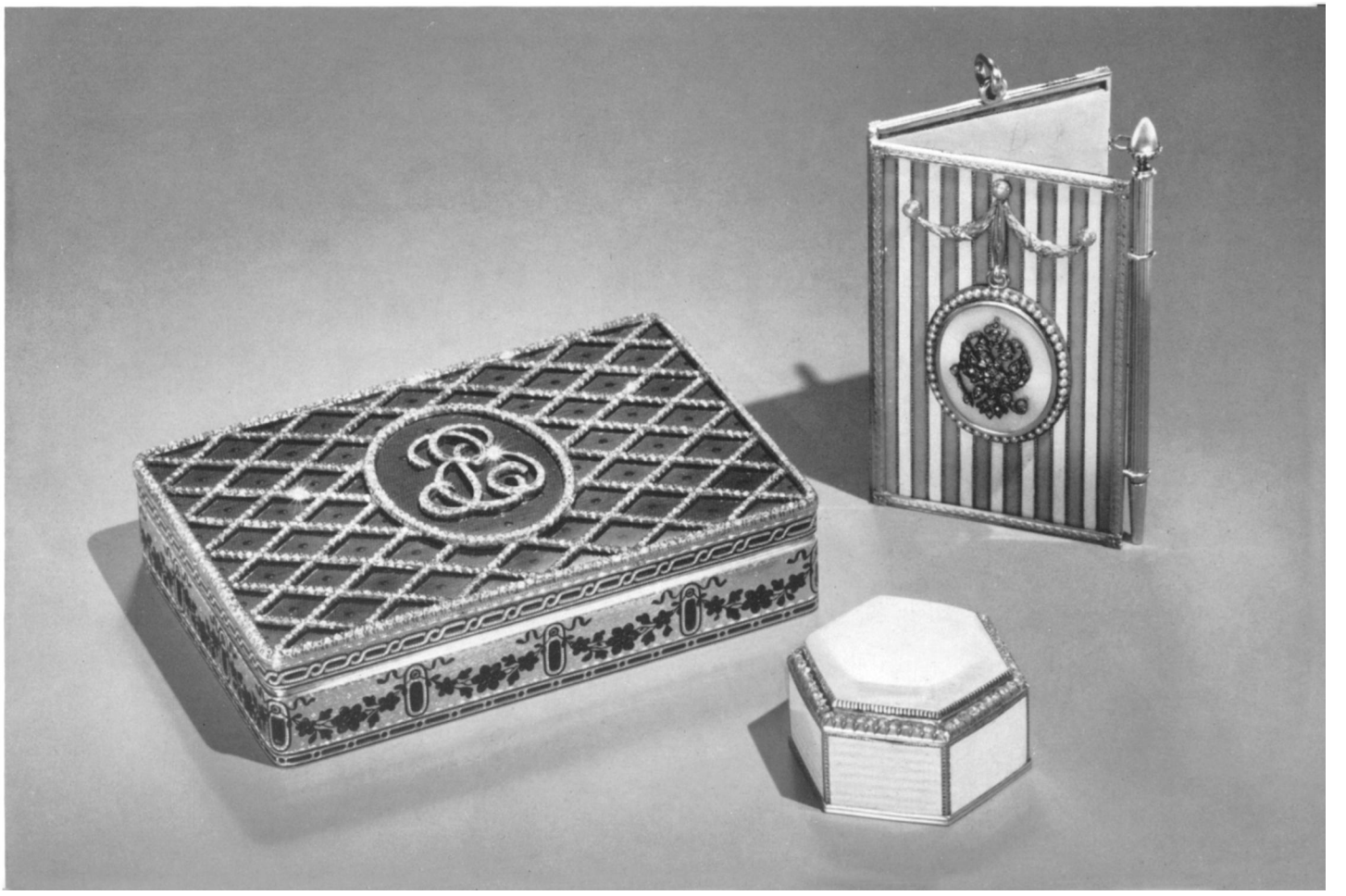
Many special commissions were received by Fabergé from clients in St. Petersburg itself. A handsome music box in gold and milky pink enamel, delicately painted in sepia (Figure 18), was made in 1907 for Prince and Princess Yusupov as a gift on their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary from their sons Nicholas and Felix. It is decorated with pictures painted in sanguine enamel of the Yusupov palaces in St. Petersburg, Moscow, and the Crimea. Ten years later Prince Felix was to murder Rasputin in the very palace on the Moika Canal in St. Petersburg that is depicted on the front panel.

Two sets of initials are central elements in the design of another special commission, a gold vanity case decorated with a diamond trellis on the deep blue enamel top, and with a design of roses in champlevé blue enamel around the sides (Figure 19). The initials EB on the cover stand for Elisa Balletta, once the reigning star at the Imperial Michael Theater, where all the latest successes of the Parisian stage were played. Weekly attendance at the French play was almost *de rigueur* for the imperial family, a duty particularly observed by the Grand Duke Alexis, Grand Admiral of the Imperial Russian Fleet, whose

initial, entwined with an anchor, appears in blue enamel on the underside. Alexis was a negligent naval administrator, who, according to his nephew the Grand Duke Alexander Mihailovitch, "was a case of slow ships and fast women." He nevertheless had great diplomatic ability and was especially popular in Washington, where he was a frequent visitor. Several years ago, Mr. Christie gave this vanity case to Eleanor Roosevelt, who had been completely captivated by it at a private exhibition of the collection. Mrs. Roosevelt very soon begged Mr. Christie to take it back, however, since provisions for safeguarding it night and day had "turned the whole house topsy-turvy." (In czarist Russia, even the most precious objects could be left about the house without anxiety.) Thus it was reunited with several other pieces from Madame Balletta's famed Fabergé collection that now belong to Mr. Christie. Two of them, a small bonbonnière with solid opal top and a notebook in gold and pink-and-white striped enamel (Figure 19), are inscribed with the date February 2, 1902, the eve of a benefit performance marking her tenth anniversary on the St. Petersburg stage. Unlike the vanity case, these were semi-official gifts from the Grand Duke Serge and the Czar, and they illustrate the interest the imperial family took in the arts, of which they were leading patrons.

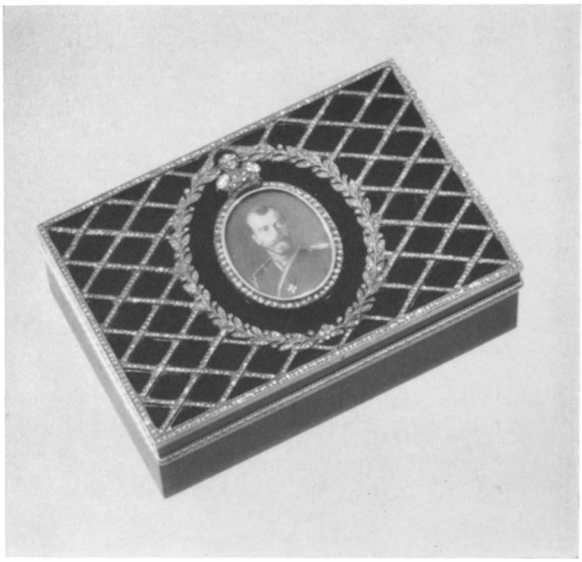
The shy last Czarina, instead of giving the eight great balls customary during the St. Petersburg season, gave only four, and varied them with four theatrical evenings in the little Hermitage Theater, followed by supper and a cotillion in the Hermitage itself, to which only some three hundred of the superelect were invited. As at all imperial command performances, every artist afterward received a present, and this custom undoubtedly explains the origin of the ring-brooch with a diamond pendant (Figure 20), inscribed "Performances at the Hermitage/1898." The lyre and olive branch in the design suggest it was for a singer or other musician. The imperial presents for the 1903 Hermitage performances

19. Vanity case; probably 1903-1906; workmaster, Henrik Wigström; gold, blue enamel, and diamonds; length 4 inches. Bonbonnière; inscription dated 1902; workmaster Michael Perchin; silver gilt, opal, white enamel, and diamonds; height 1⅛ inch. Notebook; inscription dated 1902; red and green gold, pink and white enamel, diamonds, and pearls; height 2⅞ inches. L.62.8.19, 39, 73



20. *Presentation brooch. Dated 1898. Workmaster, Michael Perchin. Gold, green enamel, diamonds, and rubies. Height 2 1/16 inches. L.62.8.76*

21. *Imperial presentation box with a miniature portrait of Nicholas II. Probably 1916-1917. Workmaster, Henrik Wigström. Nephrite, red and green gold, and diamonds. Length 3 5/8 inches. L.62.8.156*



22. *Imperial Easter egg. Probably 1885-1891. Workmaster, Michael Perchin. Red and green gold, platinum, red and green enamel, milky chalcedony, olivine, bowenite, and diamonds. Height 3 inches. L.62.8.1. Photograph: Taylor & Dull*

were made from the Czarina's own designs, and Tamara Karsarvina, then a recently graduated ballerina, recalls that she received a diamond and ruby brooch.

The Czarina, however, did not give her exclusive patronage to Fabergé, and it was the Czar's patronage, both public and private, that put Fabergé (in Henry Bainbridge's words) "in clover." It was a custom of long standing, for example, to give ministers, generals, and every other kind of official jeweled boxes in recognition of their work, and the Czar must have distributed many hundreds of these in the course of his twenty-two-year reign. A particularly attractive box of this kind (Figure 21) probably dates from his last months as czar. Of Siberian nephrite, it has a diamond trellis on the lid, in the center of which is his portrait. On his tunic he wears the St. George Medal with orange and blue ribbon, which was awarded him by the army in 1916.

23. Imperial Easter egg. Probably 1903. Workmaster, Michael Perchin. Red and green gold, pearls, diamonds, and blue, pale blue, and varicolored enamel. Height 11 inches. L.62.8.2. Photograph: Taylor & Dull

The imperial family was not only very large but was related to nearly all the royal families of Europe. To celebrate all the family weddings, christenings, anniversaries, and birthdays the Czar had scarcely less occasion to patronize Fabergé privately than in his official capacity. The most personal of all the Czar's gifts ordered from Fabergé were the decorated eggs given to his wife and mother each Easter. The exchange of eggs at Eastertime was universally observed in Russia, where the festival was the high point of the Orthodox year. The eggs were most often colored hen's eggs, but some porcelain ones were also made, and of course Fabergé made all kinds. The imperial eggs were, however, quite special. This custom had been started by Czar Alexander III, and the first of the famous Fabergé Easter eggs was made either in 1884, when Alexander was crowned, or the year following. The reason popularly given for the commission was that his wife, who had been present at the death throes of the assassinated Czar Alexander II, was morbidly preoccupied with the possibility of the murder of her own husband. To cheer her up, Alexander had the idea of giving her an Easter egg containing a "surprise," which would remind her of an eighteenth century French one she had known as a girl in Denmark. The first, designed with the aid of Agathon, was so successful that the practice was repeated each year, Nicholas II continuing it after his father's death and ordering one for his wife as well. In all, some fifty-six of these "surprise" Easter eggs were made.

Both Czars left the design and choice of materials entirely up to Fabergé, and great secrecy surrounded their progress through the workshops. Two eggs made for Marie Feodorovna are in Mr. Christie's collection,

24. *Easter-egg scent flacon. Early XX century. Workmaster, Henrik Wigström. Red, yellow, and green gold, pale blue enamel, diamonds, and moonstone. Height 1⅜ inches. L.62.8.52*

25. *Easter egg with the helmet of Her Imperial Majesty's Guard Lancers. Probably late XIX-early XX century. Purpurine, gold, silver, and black and red enamel. Height 1 inch. L.62.8.77a*

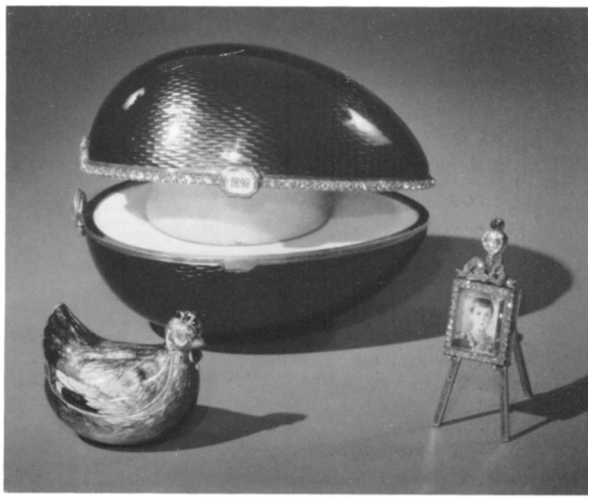
the earlier of them (Figure 22) a present from her husband. It called for the highest skills of the jeweler, the goldsmith, the enameler, and the lapidary. This egg is of red-enameled gold overlaid with openwork rococo scrolls of green gold. It rests on a stepped base of milky green bowenite set with diamonds and is mounted on a pierced rococo foot of red and green gold. The egg opens down its vertical axis to reveal a diamond-set platinum basket containing wild flowers, their petals of milky chalcedony set about bright olivine centers. Small gold leaves, enameled translucent green, appear inconspicuously among the blossoms.

The second egg (Figure 23) was a present from Nicholas II to his mother. Also the result of several specialists, it is in the form of a clock, the face of which is attached to the exterior of a large blue enamel egg containing the mechanism for both the clock and the "surprise." This consists of a hinged openwork plate on the top, which flies open each hour to allow an enameled and jeweled cockerel, crowing and flapping its wings, to rise into view. The egg is supported by a gold pedestal, which in turn rests on a high, stepped octagonal plinth enameled alternately in pale and royal blue.

Scarcely less elaborate than the imperial Easter eggs were those made from time to time for a very few prominent families, such as the Yusupovs and the Kelches. Barbara Kelch was a very rich customer who patronized Fabergé not only for objects of fantasy but also for the rarest and most precious gems he could find for her. One of her eggs (Figure 26), formerly in the collection of King Farouk, has come to rest in Mr. Christie's. Just to see it is to want immediately to pick it up. A little larger than life size, it is covered with a very beautiful red enamel over a ground of hand-tooled gold. Opening horizontally, it reveals a yolk in matte-surfaced yellow enamel, which also opens to discover a small gold and enamel hen resting in a chamois leather nest. The hen herself is hollow and contains a tiny gold folding easel, which originally no doubt contained a portrait (the present portrait is a later addition).

It must not be thought that these presents were uncommonly extravagant; even the imperial eggs did not cost more than the equivalent of a fine fur wrap, and at the other end of the scale were the enameled eggs, sometimes dated, scarcely more than half an inch high, which Fabergé made for general sale. It seems fitting to close this review of Mr. Christie's collection with a note of two especially charming examples. The first is a blue enamel scent flacon with a moonstone set in one end (Figure 24), and the other is of purpurine capped with the parade helmet of Her Majesty's Guard Lancers in gold, silver, and enamel (Figure 25). The regiment was stationed in St. Petersburg, and Fabergé may have made a number of these regimental eggs for the officers to give at Easter. The minute craftsmanship of the helmet – it requires a magnifying glass to read the regiment's battle honor, "Telesh," over the imperial eagle – the combination of materials, and the hint at refined humor seem to sum up how it was that Fabergé became indispensable to a whole generation.

26. *Easter egg. Dated 1898. Workmaster, Michael Perchin. Gold, rock crystal, ruby, diamonds, and red, opaque yellow, white, and orange enamel. Height of egg, closed, 2¼ inches. L.62.8.3*



Instruments for Agitating the Air

EDITH A. STANDEN *Associate Curator of Western European Arts*

In the eighteenth century a fan was almost as much a necessary part of a lady's costume as a handbag is today. There were 130 masters in the fanmakers guild of Paris in 1773, and some of them, wrote Savary in his *Dictionnaire Universel de Commerce*, made 20,000 *livres*-worth of fans for export only, without counting those they sold in their shops or sent to other parts of France. Tens of thousands of fans must have been made in Europe in the course of the century, and thousands have survived. There were cheap ones, sold by the gross, and very expensive ones, costing the equivalent of several hundred dollars each, which could be made to order to the customer's designs. Naturally, many of the fans, especially the more precious ones, have found their way to museums, and the Metropolitan owns a large collection of them. This has recently been enriched by a splendid gift from Mrs. William Randolph Hearst of 136 fans, half of them made before 1800; many of the later examples are also of the finest quality.

The folding fan has been so completely naturalized in Europe that its Far Eastern origin is not usually remembered; only the fans will look entirely familiar when we see an authentic Chinese or Japanese theatrical performance, in which every other detail of costume and behavior will be completely alien. The once exotic shape of the fan is now taken as much for granted as that of a teapot, in its time also a strange intruder among European jugs and ewers. The ingenious arrangement of overlapping sticks, with or without a folding leaf, had, nevertheless, been known in Europe before Oriental fans began to be imported in quantity in the late seventeenth century, but it had been used primarily for the round ecclesiastical fans called *flabella*, made to drive away flies from the altar. The fans that Thomas Coryate, the English traveler, saw in Italy in 1608 were composed, he wrote, "of a painted piece of paper and a little wooden handle"; they were apparently fixed fans, perhaps flag-shaped, like those seen in sixteenth century Venetian portraits. What he called their "excellent pictures" were probably engravings, since he said they had inscriptions and could be bought at "a meane price." The English fan at this date was made of feathers set into a mount and also did not fold. John Aubry, the antiquary, wrote that in his childhood, the 1630s, the mounts, which were often metal, could be half a yard long; he added, "With these the daughters were corrected oftentimes."

But the charm and convenience of the folding fan, as well as the opportunity it offered to craftsmen in many techniques, soon led to its adoption by fashionable society throughout Europe. By the end of the seventeenth century it was extremely prevalent, far more so, in fact, than merely its utility could account for. The fans Coryate saw were used, he wrote, by both men and women "to coole themselves withall in the time of heate, by the often fanning of their faces." The same observation was made by the Swedish traveler Peter Kalm in 1749, when he noticed that in Montreal "the ladies and the men of distinction in town" used wild-turkey tails "when they walk in the streets during the intense heat." The writer of the article on fans in Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, however, with the perspicacity and outspokenness that caused so much trouble for this publication, said that although European women had, not long since, used fans merely to refresh themselves in summertime, they had recently begun to carry them in winter as well – "mais c'est seulement pour leur servir de contenance." As we should say today, the fan, which served to keep you in countenance, had become a status symbol. Savary's innocuous *Dictionnaire*, on the other hand, says that ladies put fans in their muffs in wintertime so that they could cool themselves in crowded theaters or overheated apartments.

Like other objects, such as automobiles, that have functions other than simple usefulness, the fan has always been much affected by changes in fashion. In the eighteenth century, it increased in size as skirts grew wider; Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu wrote jestingly in 1744 that some fans exceeded the flails of a mill and could eclipse a small woman who flirted one of them. These are the fans that open up to a full half circle and are called *à grand vol.* As dresses shrank at the end of the century, fans became minute, only to expand again to match the crinolines of a hundred years ago.

The subjects depicted on the leaves are also varied, but, through the centuries, fans are most often decorated with what Coryate described as "amorous things tending to dalliance." The loves of the gods appear with monotonous regularity, shepherds woo shepherdesses, and elegant companies make music in gardens. Consequently, a large group of fans, however exquisite in workmanship, can be monotonous; fans were not meant to be seen laid out in rows. The illustrations for this article, therefore, are of examples from Mrs. Hearst's collection that have something unusual about them, conversation pieces when they were made and still well able to captivate and amuse.

"La Dame du Palais de la Reine" from the Monument du Costume. *Engraving by P. A. Martini after J. M. Moreau le Jeune, 1777. Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 33.6.3*

The lady-in-waiting to the queen wears the obligatory court dress, already old-fashioned when this engraving was made. Her fan, however, is up-to-date, with its leaf divided into three medallions and the sticks separated from each other, *en squelette.*

A severe etiquette regulated the use of the fan at the French court. The Baronne d'Oberkirch, in her memoirs, wrote that fans could not be opened in the presence of the queen. There was one exception to this rule; a small object that the queen wished to look at closely could not be crudely handed to her; it must be proffered on an open fan. One day Marie Antoinette admired a bracelet containing a portrait of the Grand Duchess of Russia that Mme. d'Oberkirch was wearing.

The baroness accordingly opened her fan, which was of carved ivory, as fine as lace, and put the bracelet on it. The fan bent and broke, and the bracelet fell to the ground. The queen had already stretched out her hand, so the situation was truly embarrassing, especially for a provincial visitor from Alsace. Mme. d'Oberkirch rose to the occasion: she stooped, an almost painful procedure, she said, because of her court dress, picked up the bracelet, and handed it to Marie Antoinette, saying, "I beg the Queen please to consider that it is not I who do this, but Madame la grande-duchesse de Russie." The queen smiled and nodded, and everyone felt that the baroness had acquitted herself admirably.

The lower classes were not held to such stringent regulations. In 1781, fifty market women from the Halles of Paris, dressed in black silk and diamonds, came to Versailles to congratulate the queen on the birth of the dauphin; three of them were allowed to approach the royal bed, one of whom delivered an oration that had prudently been written out on her fan. She cast her eyes down on it several times without embarrassment, said Mme. Campan in her memoirs. It would not be many years before these women would be screaming for the blood of "l'Autrichienne."

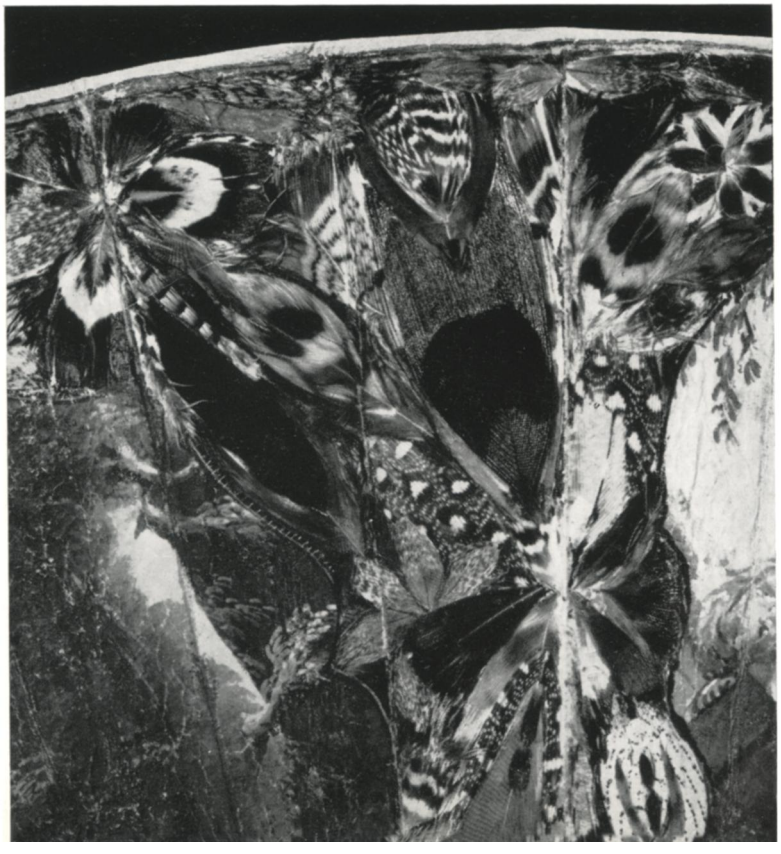
When a court went into mourning, black fans had to be used by all fashionable women. Mrs. Montagu reported to her husband from Stilton at the time of the death of George II that a Scotch countess had bought up "all the black cloth, crapes and bombazeen, black ribbons and fans before the poor shopkeepers knew of the King's death"; this made the ladies of the neighborhood very angry.

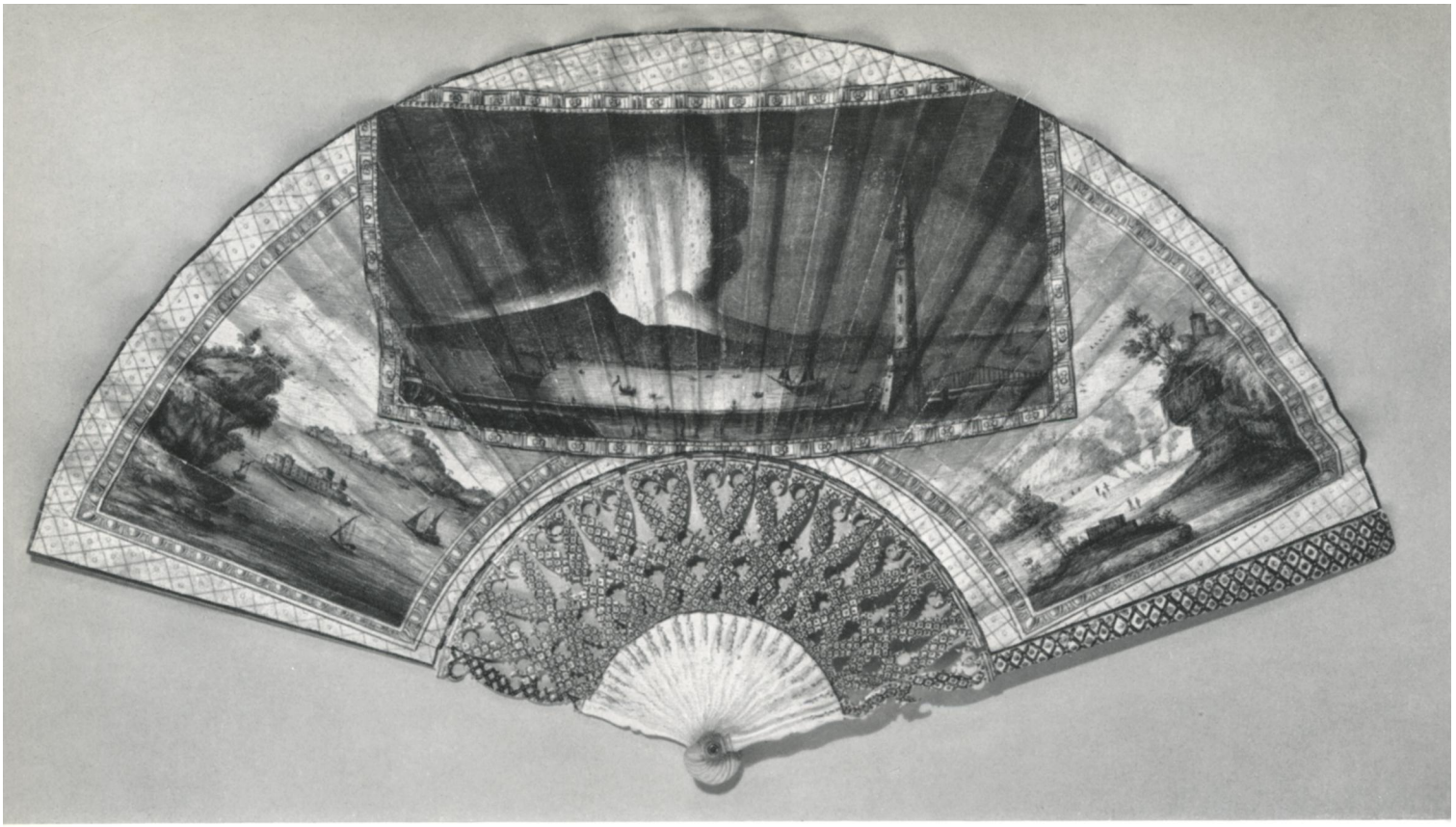
Bacchus and Ariadne

Fan, probably Dutch, about 1770. Painted paper leaf with applied feathers; ivory sticks, carved and decorated in gold and silver. Gift of Mrs. William Randolph Hearst, 63.90.89

The mythological scene in the center is not very clearly characterized, but, as the young man has a garland of green leaves and is accompanied by a feline of uncertain species, it seems probable that he is Bacchus, bringing consolation to the abandoned Ariadne.

The chief feature of this colorful fan, however, is the decoration with real feathers that fills all the gaps between the pictorial medallions. There are more of them on the reverse, which has figures that are partly covered with real silk fabrics and seem to be copied from Chinese originals. This fidelity to an Oriental design, much greater than that shown in most European chinoiseries, suggests a Dutch origin for the fan.





Vesuvius

Fan, Italian, 1779. Painted parchment leaf; painted ivory sticks. Gift of Mrs. William Randolph Hearst, 63.90.73

Contemporary events and personalities in the public eye were frequently depicted on fans in the eighteenth century. Addison, in the *Spectator*, described a lady who had prints of the notorious informer, Titus Oates, in almost every corner of her room, on the lid of her snuffbox, and on her handkerchief; when she opened her fan, there he was again, "placed with great Gravity among the Sticks of it." But less controversial characters, such as royalty, are more often found, and the events shown are seldom violently partisan. Then, as now, tourists were catered to. When Dr. Johnson's patroness, Mrs. Thrale, had cut herself off from decent society by marrying the Italian musician Gabriele Piozzi, she went to Italy with him, and wrote home from Naples in 1786: "We have been entertained with a magnificent Eruption [of Vesuvius] which the Painters have been putting upon Fan Mounts for the English ladies to carry back to London with them." A dated fan showing this eruption is included in Mrs. Hearst's gift, but the one here illustrated is copied from a print of the more spectacular display in August 1779. Sir William Hamilton, the British representative at the Neapolitan court, later to be the husband of Emma, Lady Hamilton, wrote an account of it; in the evening of August 9, he said, "a fountain of liquid transparent fire began to rise, and gradually increasing, arrived at so amazing a height as to strike everyone who beheld it with the most awful astonishment . . . and the blaze of it reflecting strongly upon the surface of the sea, which was at that time perfectly smooth, added greatly to this sublime view."

On the right of the Vesuvius panel on the fan is the lighthouse at the end of the Molo Grande in Naples harbor. An unmounted fan leaf in the Museum's print collection has the same view in reverse.

The scenes on either side are somewhat fanciful renderings of places in the environs of Naples; that on the left may show the fortified island of Nisida, with Monte Miseno in the distance, and that on the right is perhaps Solfatara di Pozzuoli, with its steaming *fumarole*. The simple but gaily painted sticks add to the charm of this unpretentious fan, which was probably quite inexpensive and would have made a good present to take home to London for a not too important person. When Burrell Massingberd wrote in 1714 from England to William Kent, the artist, then in Rome, he asked him to "bespeak" three fans, one "the best drawn and finished you can possibly gett done," as it was "for a lady I am going to commit matrimony with"; the other two, for the lady's mother and sister, could be cheaper.

Vertumnus and Pomona

Fan, Italian, about 1760. Painted paper leaf; carved and painted ivory sticks. Gift of Mrs. William Randolph Hearst, 63.90.64

When Lady Mary Coke was in Paris in 1775, she wrote in her journal that she called on Mme. du Deffand and was invited to supper. Mme. du Deffand was blind, but her salon was one of the most famous in Paris. Lady Mary brought her a present: "I carried her a fan. She asked what the mount was, whether there were no birds; the Mademoiselle who lives with her assured her there were none. She was glad of it, birds in a fan-mount portended quarrels and trouble. She was told there was nothing in the fan I had given her but what signified peace and plenty – whether this was pleasantry or superstition I can't tell you."

Mme. du Deffand, some ten years earlier, had had one of the famous quarrels of literary history, when she found out that her companion and protégée, Mlle. de Lespinasse, was entertaining the habitués of the salon on her own. Perhaps this had been portended by such a charming bird as appears on the fan illustrated here.

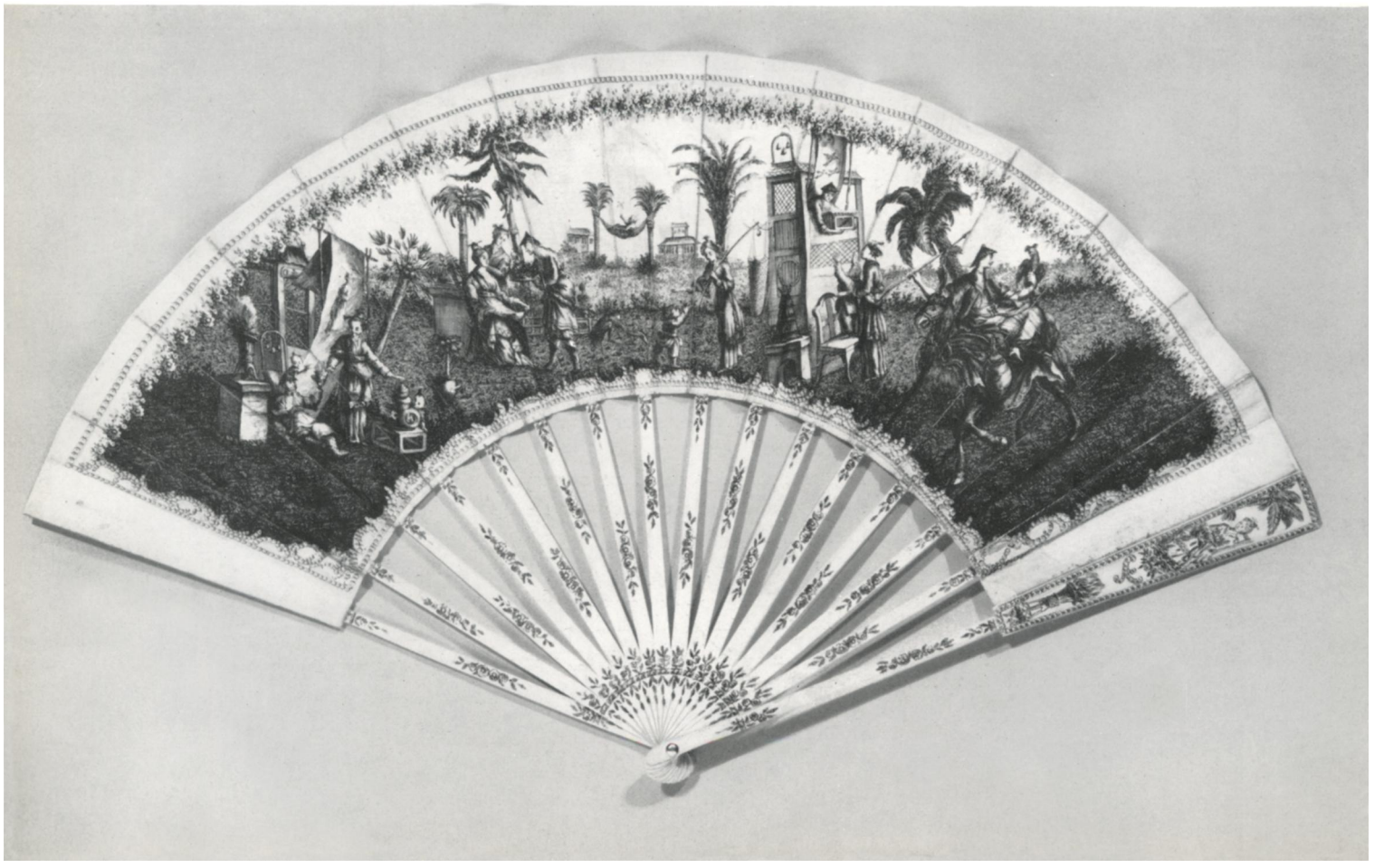
Chinoiserie

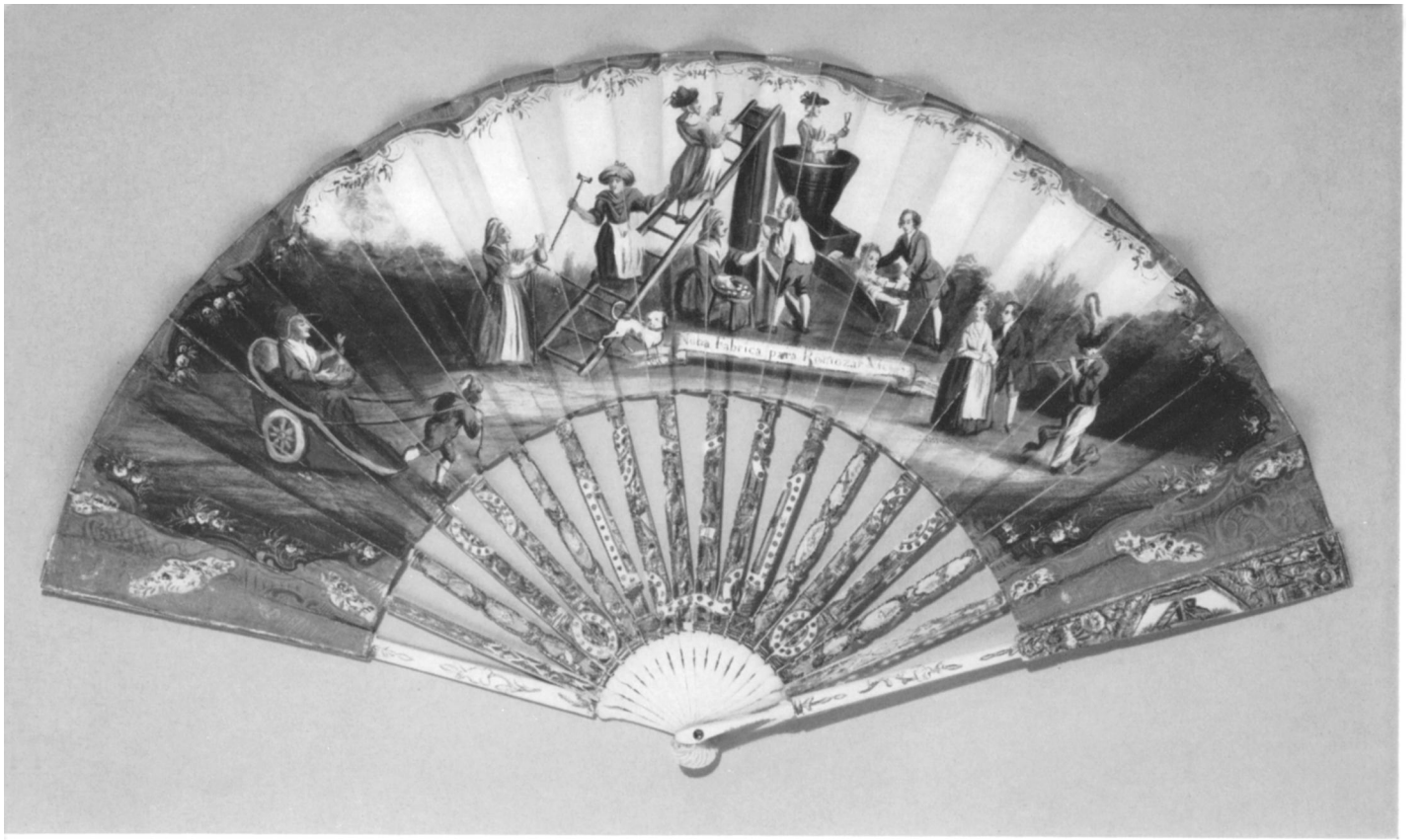
Fan, German (Bamberg), about 1785. Paper leaf; ivory sticks, decorated in black. Gift of Mrs. William Randolph Hearst, 63.90.56

Like lampshades in the 1920s, fan leaves were often decorated by amateurs. A *Spectator* article of 1712 purports to be a letter from a man with a grievance; his wife, who "employ'd her early Years in learning all those Accomplishments we generally understand by good Breeding and a polite Education," is so industrious that she is costing him a great deal of money. "Limning, one would think, is no expensive Diversion, but as she manages the Matter, 'tis a very considerable Addition to her Disbursements; which you will easily believe when you know she paints Fans for all her female Acquaintance, and draws all her Relations' pictures in Miniature; the first must be mounted by no Body but *Colmar*, and the other set by no Body but *Charles Mather*." Colmar's part was presumably to provide the fan sticks and undertake the tricky business of mounting the leaf on them; he must have been the best fanmaker in London.

The delicate pen drawing of graceful Orientals in elegant poses on the fan illustrated here is identified as amateur work by the inscription on the reverse: "Fait par la plume de J. Caspar Eder à Bamberg." The minuteness of the detail, down to the pinwheel held by the baby in the hammock slung from two palms in the distance and the tufted parrot perched on the hand of the camel-rider on a side-saddle at the right, is another indication of a labor of love; it would scarcely be worth a professional's time to lavish so much care on a black and white mount of a fairly simple fan.

Johann Kaspar Eder, in fact, is a known amateur artist. He was born in Bamberg in 1744 and died there in 1817, having produced, presumably mostly to give away, many portraits, landscapes, miniatures, and designs for snuff boxes. Another fan with the same signature is known; it has a less amusing subject, a gay company in an apple orchard, but the same precise and elegant draughtsmanship.





The Mill of Youth

Fan, Spanish, mid-eighteenth century. Painted paper leaf; ivory sticks, decorated in gold and silver. Gift of Mrs. William Randolph Hearst, 63.90.66

The Fountain of Youth is an age-old dream. Ponce de León hoped to find it in Florida, and Cranach painted it as a large swimming pool, to which old crones are brought in wheelbarrows, litters, and carts, and from which they climb out as slender young girls. The fan illustrated here shows another method of obtaining the same result. The inscription, in Spanish, "New factory for rejuvenating old women," suggests a mechanical imagination, foreshadowing the Industrial Revolution, but, in fact, the Old Wives' Mill is well known in folklore. There are German accounts of it that say it starts work at Whitsun, or that milk has to be added to complete the operation.

It is made clear on the fan that this is a commercial undertaking; the old women carry moneybags, and gold coins are laid out on the three-legged stool under the mill. But they have glasses of red wine to hearten them as they climb the ladder and ride down in the hopper. As in all the representations of the Fountain, there are delightful young men to greet them as they slide down the chute.

The mill itself is of a simple type, worked by manpower, although it is not entirely clear where the grinding actually takes place. It appears again, in simplified form, on each of the two outer sticks, or guards, enabling the fan to be easily identified when shut; one can imagine that the owner (surely a very young girl) would have been glad to have this identification so that she could choose another fan when she was going to call on her grandmother.

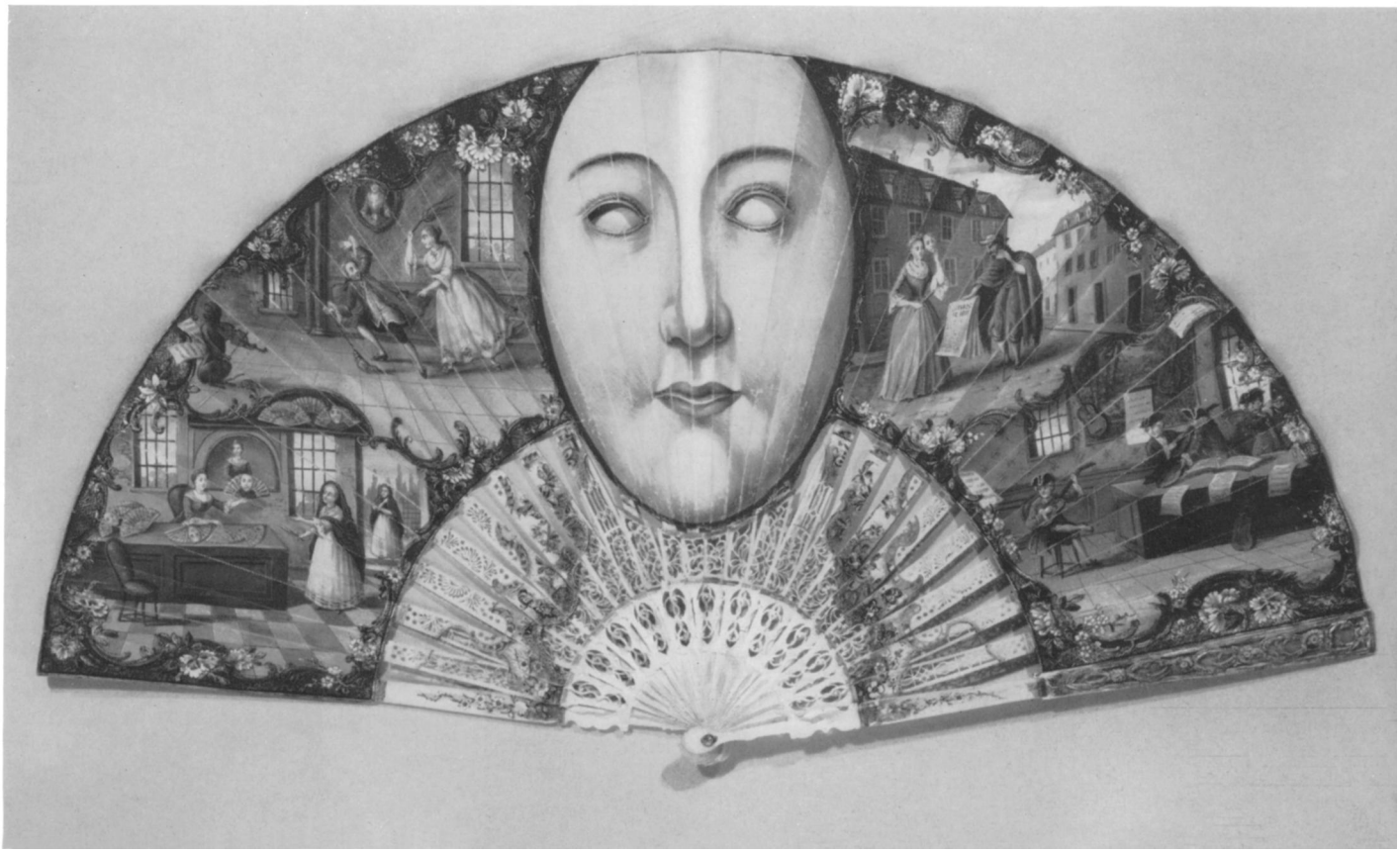
The Mask

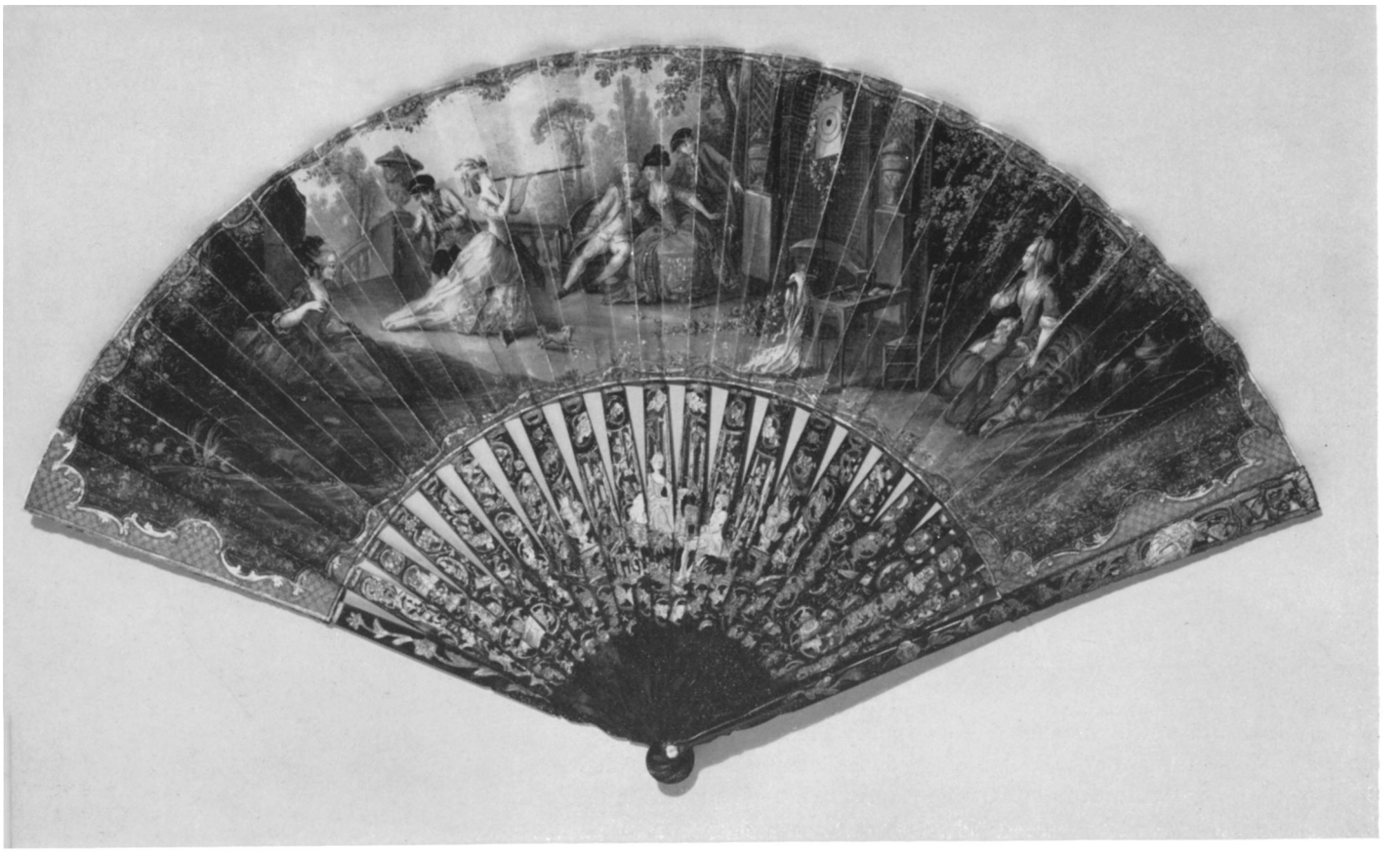
Fan, Spanish, about 1770. Painted paper leaf; carved, painted, and gilded ivory sticks. Gift of Mrs. William Randolph Hearst, 63.90.10

Spanish women are said to know instinctively how to use a fan, and this example, which is also a mask with eyeholes, must have lent itself particularly well to expert manipulation. But it seems to have been meant also as an advertisement, for in the shop depicted in the lower scene on the left are several fans of the same type; one almost looks for the words "Patent applied for." On the other side is a music shop; the customers are playing guitars and a flute, and there are sheets of music available for them. It was customary in the eighteenth century, as it is today, for instruments and music to be sold in the same shop. Above, a lady with a mask and a fan is being offered a newspaper by a ragged seller. The uppermost sheet is inscribed: "El Diario de Hoy," today's *Diario*. This paper, which at first bore the splendid title *Diario noticioso, curioso-erudito y comercial, público y ecónomico*, was the most famous daily of Madrid in the second half of the eighteenth century, when it was very fashionable to read the papers. The dramatist Ramon de la Cruz has a father say to a suitor, "You abominable and vulgar young man . . . who at ten in the morning are not yet enlightened by the daily paper, how do you expect me to give my daughter in marriage . . . to one so ignorant of news?"

The fourth scene on the fan shows a man with a broom violently assaulted by a woman, while a monkey playing a violin turns his head to look at his music. It is reminiscent of popular prints on the theme of the "world turned upside down," which show such inconceivable happenings as a horse riding a man, a chair sitting on a man, a man keeping the rain off his umbrella, and a man holding a baby and a broom being beaten by his wife. It may represent a scene from one of the many farcical comedies of the period; Ramon de la Cruz wrote nearly 450 of them.

An almost identical fan in the Esther Oldham Collection, Boston, has an inscription that includes the word "Sevilla," but the buildings in the street scene are typical of Madrid, and it seems probable that these fans were made there.





The Blowgun

Fan, French, about 1765. Painted parchment leaf; carved and gilded tortoise-shell sticks. Gift of Mrs. William Randolph Hearst, 63.90.30

An elegantly dressed young lady stands on a terrace and aims a weapon at a garlanded target hanging in a trellised arbor. Her companions watch with some indications of surprise or admiration in their gestures. But their amazement is nothing compared to ours, when we realize that the weapon she holds to her lips can be nothing but a blowgun.

The blowgun is properly a weapon of jungle areas; it is more practical than a bow when the hunter is surrounded by dense foliage, and it can be fired upwards, to strike birds sitting on branches, more accurately than anything except a firearm. Only when its darts carry poison is it effective against large animals or men. Early explorers reported it from Borneo and Brazil, but its old English name, *sarbacane*, and similar words in French and Spanish are derived from the Arabic and appear in the sixteenth century, indicating a widely diffused knowledge of the weapon by that date. When Louis XIII was five years old, in 1606, he was given a *sarbacane de verre*, along with a little silver cannon and a little bow with arrows. Nonetheless, every European traveler who encountered the weapon in a savage part of the world felt bound to describe it in some detail for the benefit of his readers. Thus, Isaac Weld, in his *Travels through the States of North America and Lower Canada, during the years 1795, 1796, and 1797*, found the Senecas around Lake Erie particularly skilled in its use. "The blow-gun is a narrow tube," he wrote, "commonly about six feet in length, made of a cane reed, or of some pithy wood, through which they drive short slender arrows by the force of the breath. The arrows are not much thicker than the lower string of a violin; they are headed generally with little triangular bits of tin, and round the opposite ends, for the length of two inches, a quantity of the down of thistles, or something very like it, is bound, so as to leave the arrows at this part of such a thickness that they may but barely pass into the tube. The arrows are put in at the end of the tube that is held next to the mouth, the down catches the breath, and with a smart puff they will fly to the

distance of fifty yards. . . . I have never known them once to miss their aim, although they shot at the little red squirrels, which are not half the size of a rat. . . . The effect of these guns appears at first like magic. The tube is put to the mouth, and in the twinkling of an eye you see the squirrel that is aimed at fall lifeless to the ground, no report, not the smallest noise even, is to be heard, nor is it possible to see the arrow, so quickly does it fly, until it appears fastened in the body of the animal."

But if the sarbacane or blowgun was actually popular as a sporting weapon in Europe in the eighteenth century, it is odd that its use should be so undocumented. Possibly the lady on the fan had obtained one from an explorer, or even from an Indian visitor to France; a group of Indians from Louisiana were presented to Louis XV in 1725 and aroused much interest with their strange clothes and weapons. Tribes of this area used short blowguns. We can perhaps imagine the lady to have been the owner of the fan, who commissioned the subject as a permanent record of her exotic expertise.

Trade card for a fan shop, English, eighteenth century. Bella C. Landauer Collection

It will be noticed that Esther Burney sold "India" as well as English fans. Oriental fans, in fact, were imported into Europe throughout the century. The daybook of Lazare Duvaux, a Parisian *marchand mercier*, shows purchases of "éventails des Indes" and "de la Chine" for twenty-one or twenty-four *sous* each; when Mme. de Pompadour bought "12 éventails de Nankin" from his shop in 1752, she paid seventy-two *livres* for them. He does not list any French fans, which were probably always bought from a *maitre éventailliste*. Mme. d'Oberkirch mentions one called Méré, who, she said, painted them in gouache better than Boucher or Watteau could have done.

Nude Figures

Fan, French, 1914. Painted and gilded ivory. Gift of Mrs. William Randolph Hearst, 63.90.105

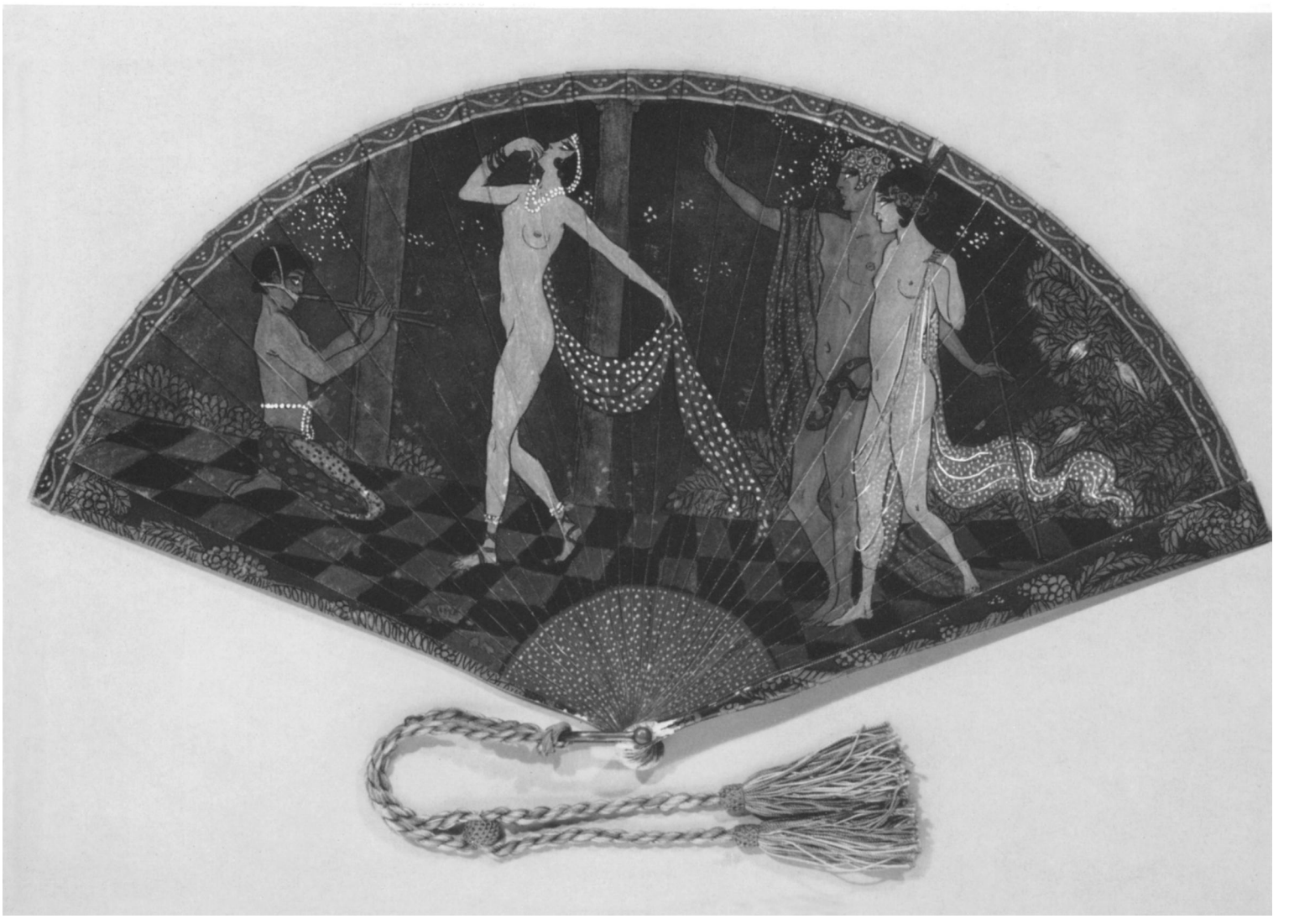
The Russian ballets of Sergei Diaghilev came to Paris in 1909. "Our descendants will scarcely be able to conceive," wrote a French commentator twenty years later, "what a revelation, what a liberation, these spectacles were to us. . . . The imagination of artists was collectively seduced, almost physically, by these polychrome orgies, by this dynamism of colored forces [*ce dynamisme des forces colorées*]." For many a young artist, they were "what ancient Rome had been for Poussin or David, what Gothic cathedrals had been for the Romantics, what *quattrocento* frescoes had been for the English Pre-Raphaelites." From 1909 to 1914, that period "before the end of a world, which we think of now as a Paradise lost," a decorative style was created, very fashionable, very "in," that was known as the "Style Ballets Russes."

One of the young artists who rode on the crest of this wave of enthusiasm was George Barbier. He was born in Nantes in 1882 and had his first exhibition in Paris in 1911; the preface to the catalogue was written by the poet and novelist Pierre Louys, who called him "un jeune peintre vraiment grec," but one of the three groups of drawings in the show was called "Ballets Russes." The fan illustrated here bears his name and conjures up, for anyone who was grown up before the first World War, or even in the twenties, the wildly exciting settings by Bakst, the shocking license of *Scheherazade*, the rioting on the first night of *Le Sacre du Printemps*.

The fan has the ominous date "1914," but the same design appeared in color in the *Journal des Dames et des Modes* during 1912. It is one of three, described as "Éventails de Paquin d'après G. Barbier et Paul Tribe." Barbier also designed costumes for Poiret, but his greatest success was as a book illustrator;

many volumes with his plates appeared through the 1920s and into the 1930s. He was also successful in the theater; *Casanova*, with his costumes, appeared in New York in 1922, and he made the settings for Rudolph Valentino's film *Monsieur Beaucaire*. To judge from a portrait in one of his books, he was a handsome man, and he lived in great style among his collections of porcelains, laces, jewels, fans, and lacquers. An admirer wrote of his works in 1927: "When our age, like so many others, has gone down into the dust of dead things, when everything that is flame today has turned to ashes and dust, a few of his watercolors, a few of his drawings, will be enough to call back to life the very taste and spirit of the years through which we have lived."

But while Barbier was winning his first successes, Picasso and Braque were establishing Cubism; a revolution in the major arts was under way that would eventually affect every aspect of decoration, and the "Style Ballets Russes" went down before it. When *Scheherazade* is revived today, it is comic rather than blood-curdling, and George Barbier has been so completely forgotten that it has proved impossible to discover whether he is now alive or dead.



1. Hat jewel, Italian, end of the XV century, diameter 2¼ inches, shown with wings open. Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 17.190.921

2. Bust of a girl, by Tullio Lombardo (1455-1532). Bequest of George Blumenthal, 41.190.33

3. Hat jewel with wings closed

Goldsmiths' Work from Milan

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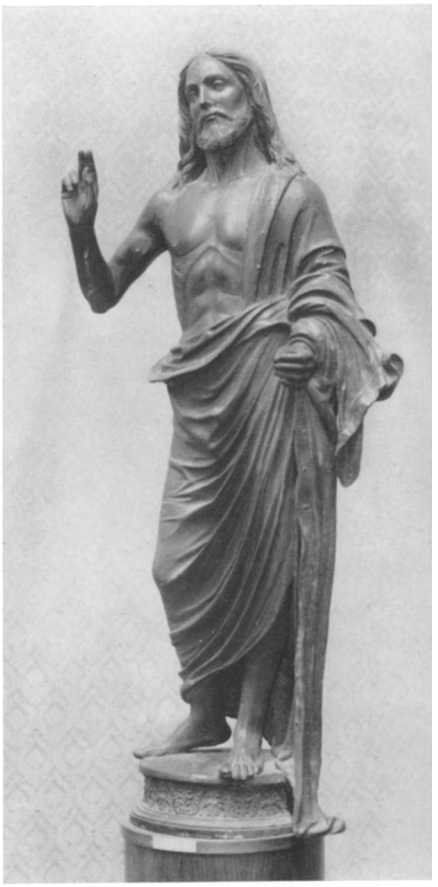
Jewels of the Renaissance period are extremely rare. Their small size caused them to be lost, and their precious material invited destruction. Gem stones served as ready cash, and gold settings were melted down or modified to conform to the latest fashion. Moreover, any jewels that did survive these hazards are usually far removed from their country of origin. Old inventories disclose that they were an integral part of royal dowries, New Year's gifts, ambassadorial presentations, or ransom offerings. In addition to the movements of jewels, there were those of itinerant goldsmiths in quest of opportunities, or following a call by royal patrons. All these circumstances combine to obscure the origin of Renaissance jewels.

Of all the splendid jewels described in the inventories of the Sforza at Milan, not one is known to survive. The rise and fall of the house of Sforza was closely linked to the fate of Milan. Under Sforza rule, the city endured constant warfare, invasion, and looting. The pursuit of these wars compelled Lodovico il Moro (1451-1508), Duke of Milan, to pawn most of his gems, including "Il Lupo" (The Wolf), valued at twelve million *ducati*, "Lo Spico" (The Mirror), and "Il Caduceo" (The Caduceus). Soon afterwards, his wife, Beatrice d'Este, was forced to hand over to the French all her personal jewelry, in a vain attempt to free her husband from life imprisonment. The French invasion in Lombardy was followed by Swiss, Spanish, and Austrian rule. Because of these unfavorable conditions, few valuables survived unless they had found sanctuary in church treasuries.

A circular gold jewel with a representation of the veil of Veronica (Figure 1), intended as a hat badge (or *enseigne*, as such jewels were originally called), is of unknown provenance but in a style that seems characteristic of Milan before the close of the fifteenth century. Few are still in existence; they are better known today from late fifteenth and sixteenth century portraits, both north and south of the Alps, by Hans Holbein the Younger, Bernhard Strigel, Barent von Orley, Jean Clouet, and Bartolommeo Veneto, to name a few. Our jewel is unusual in displaying a miniature folding altar, each wing with figures of saints: John the Baptist and Mary Magdalene, in high relief and white enamel, on the outside (Figure 3), and the Angel and Virgin of the Annunciation, in translucent enamel, on the inside. The figures of the Annunciation are executed in the enameling technique known as "basse taille." The design is lightly incised in the gold surface and shines through the layer of translucent enamel above. Enhanced by vivid color, the flat surface lends the enamels a pictorial character.

When opened, the wings disclose the veil of Veronica in white enamel with the head of Christ in gold relief, and within the lunette above appears the half figure of God the Father in benediction, painted gray on red enamel. The border, defined by two twisted gold wires, displays the legend UNA SOLA AMO CON FEDE (One alone I love faithfully), expressing a curious combination of religious and profane sentiment.

During the early Renaissance, most artists



4. Risen Christ, school of Lombardo, about 1500, height 54 inches. Museo Poldi Pezzoli, Milan

5. Madonna with Angels and Saints, by Bernardino Butinone (c. 1450-1507). Palazzo Borromeo, Isola Bella, Lake Maggiore. Photograph: Alinari

pursued their initial studies in the workshop of a goldsmith. This practice resulted in an unprecedented harmony between works of art of dif rent media, such as architecture, sculpture painting, engraving, embroidery, and goldsmiths' work. The choice of a miniature altar with folding wings as a motif of decoration for a hat badge makes evident the interchange of form between jeweler, sculptor, and painter.

The youthful saints of the *enseigne*, in gold relief and enamel, with soft, smooth features and heads slightly bent, display an air of innocence. This mood they share with portrait heads by Tullio Lombardo, member of a family of sculptors from Lombardy, active primarily in Venice and Padua, as shown by comparing them with the Museum's life-size marble bust of a girl (Figure 2). In spite of the differences of scale and material, the facial expression of the girl is similar to that of the small figure of Mary Magdalene in the *enseigne*. Both saints, Mary Magdalene and John the Baptist, are of short proportions, and their attire is timeless. Of related style, and also from the Lombardo workshop, are a bronze figure of the Risen Christ at the Poldi Pezzoli Museum in Milan (Figure 4) and two statuettes of apostles, formerly at the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin, but destroyed during the war. Proportions, firm stance, and the draped gown are similar in all these figures. These comparisons serve not only to determine the artistic environment of the goldsmith who made the hat jewel, but also to point out the sculptural qualities inherent even in his small work.

In search of works of art of similar style and imagery, we now turn to paintings from the region of Milan done before 1499, the year of the French invasion, when the flourishing activities of local and court artists came to a standstill. Bernardino Butinone of Treviglio in Lombardy is the painter whose work shows the greatest affinities with our *enseigne*. His style is based upon early impressions derived from Padua and Ferrara, and enhanced by the luminosity of color that Vincenzo Foppa of Brescia had introduced to Milanese paint-

ing. A panel of the Madonna with Angels and Saints (Figure 5) signed and dated 1484, the year Butinone became master in Milan, has an inherent metallic quality, which confirms Ferrarese influence and suggests the comparison with our gold badge. The childlike saints, standing before ornate columns and pilasters inspired by Bramante's architecture in Milan, are also of short proportions, with heads inclined to one side. Their clearly drawn, unbroken outlines emphasize the closeness of concept to sculpture, and to the small statuettes on our hat badge in particular.

Four statuettes of angels in the Metropolitan (Figures 6, 7, and 8) also display characteristics of Milanese art of the late fifteenth century. They are almost identical pairs, made of cast and chased gold, with white enamel covering faces, hands, and feet, and some red enamel on the sleeves. These angels would seem to have formed part of a larger composition, possibly a Pax similar to one, surmounted by angels, presented by Francesco II Sforza to the Cathedral of Vigevano. The short figures have the childlike features and round faces we have seen earlier. The clinging deep folds of their double-belted gowns reveal soft, round bodies typical of the imagery of Milanese artists of the generation before Leonardo.

Among sculptors, Giovanni Amadeo of Pavia (1447-1522) adopted this style of figure in terra cotta and in marble, particularly at the Certosa of Pavia, the Cappella Colleoni in Bergamo, and the Cathedral of Milan, with which he was closely associated after 1490. His preference for flowing lines and rounded forms may have evolved as a reaction against the somewhat earlier style of Christoforo Mantegazza, with whom he cooperated at the Certosa at Pavia, but whose lines are harder, almost brittle, and whose figures display a nervous tension which Amadeo replaced with tranquility of pose and expression. Yet, both sculptors were inspired by the painters Butinone and Foppa, each adopting different

6. *Angels, Italian, end of the XV century, height 4⅝ inches. Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 17.190.873-6*

7, 8. Two of the angels of Figure 6

elements, according to personal temperament and taste.

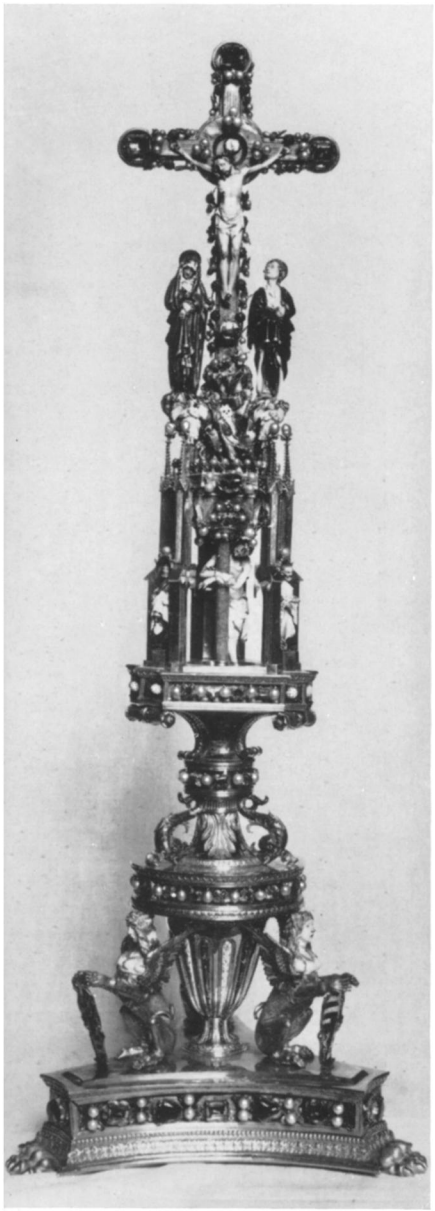
The close interdependence of masters participating to create the artistic climate of Milan during the last quarter of the fifteenth century is evident again in the comparison of the four gold angels with others made of marble or stained glass or in miniature painting. A marble relief of the school of Amadeo (Figure 10) shows angels of a closely related type, as do the stained-glass windows of the Cathedral of Milan, attributed to Foppa (Figure 9). All these representations of angels confirm the unity of vision then experienced by Milanese artists. Angels appeared to them as childlike beings, with shoulder-length, curly hair, attired in long-sleeved, double-belted gowns, which cascade to their ankles without obscuring their firm stance. The large spread wings are heavenly attributes whose great decorative value the artists never underestimated.

Winged angels among winged putti, winged sphinxes, and the winged heraldic serpent of the Sforza arms fill the ornamental border of the first page of the *Sforziada* by Giovanni Simonetta, printed at Milan in 1490 (Figure 12). This illuminated border decoration is the work of Giovanni Pietro Birago, a miniature painter referred to as the Master of the Sforza Book of Hours (British Museum Add. Ms. 342 94) until his signature was rediscovered on fragments at the Uffizi, and on another copy of the *Sforziada* at Warsaw. Birago was the leading miniaturist at the court of the Sforza. Some of his ornaments are also known from engravings, executed either by the master himself, or, as A. M. Hind has suggested, by Zoan Andrea of Mantua. All the

9. Detail, The Flight into Egypt, stained-glass window attributed to Vincenzo Foppa (c. 1430-c. 1515). Cathedral of Milan. Photograph: Mario Perotti

10. Angels, from a tabernacle, school of Amadeo. Civico Museo del Castello Sforzesco, Milan. Photograph: Mario Perotti

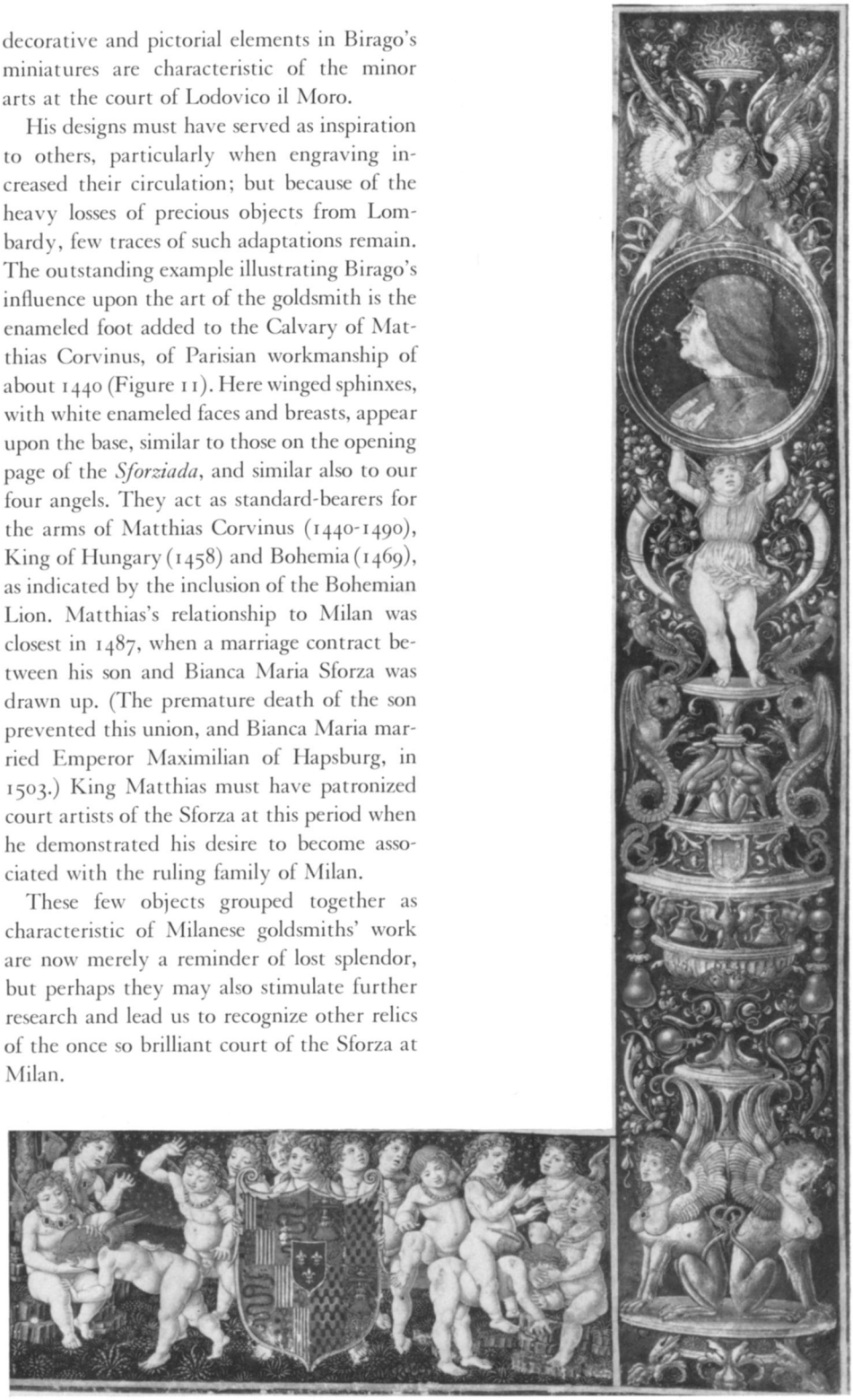
11. Calvary of Matthias Corvinus, height 28⅜ inches. Cathedral of Gran (Esztergom), Hungary



decorative and pictorial elements in Birago's miniatures are characteristic of the minor arts at the court of Lodovico il Moro.

His designs must have served as inspiration to others, particularly when engraving increased their circulation; but because of the heavy losses of precious objects from Lombardy, few traces of such adaptations remain. The outstanding example illustrating Birago's influence upon the art of the goldsmith is the enameled foot added to the Calvary of Matthias Corvinus, of Parisian workmanship of about 1440 (Figure 11). Here winged sphinxes, with white enameled faces and breasts, appear upon the base, similar to those on the opening page of the *Sforziada*, and similar also to our four angels. They act as standard-bearers for the arms of Matthias Corvinus (1440-1490), King of Hungary (1458) and Bohemia (1469), as indicated by the inclusion of the Bohemian Lion. Matthias's relationship to Milan was closest in 1487, when a marriage contract between his son and Bianca Maria Sforza was drawn up. (The premature death of the son prevented this union, and Bianca Maria married Emperor Maximilian of Hapsburg, in 1503.) King Matthias must have patronized court artists of the Sforza at this period when he demonstrated his desire to become associated with the ruling family of Milan.

These few objects grouped together as characteristic of Milanese goldsmiths' work are now merely a reminder of lost splendor, but perhaps they may also stimulate further research and lead us to recognize other relics of the once so brilliant court of the Sforza at Milan.



12. Part of the illuminated border of the first page of the Sforziada, by Giovanni Pietro Birago (active last quarter of the XV century). British Museum, London

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

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